INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THIS collection of *Tales from Hindu Drama* comprises, with the exception of 'Sakuntala,' the best stories from the writings of the old Sanskrit dramatists. An attempt has been made to retain something of the flavour of the original dialogue and of the original imagery, even when, as in the case of the mastery of the elephant by the lion, convention and unlikelihood are plain.

It will be observed that every plot ends happily; there is no tragedy among these plays; the love stories suggest rather 'Twelfth Night' than 'Romeo and Juliet.' Miraculous intervention, or a marvellous change of fortune brings a tale to a happy conclusion. There are comic scenes, often of a farcical nature, to give relief from the more serious. These points may perhaps be suggested to the class for study, and, by those who have read any of Shakespeare's plays, for comparison.

CONTENTS

THE VISION OF VASAVADATTA

[SVAPNA VASAVADATTA]

BHĀSA

Bhasa was, according to Indian tradition, the earliest Sanskrit dramatist. Chanakya, minister of Chandragupta, the Maurya Emperor, quotes lines from Bhasa's plays; as Chanakya lived in the last quarter of the IV Century B.C., Bhasa must have lived in that century or earlier. His style is devoid of the artificialities of later Sanskrit dramatic or poetic style. Nothing is known about his life. Thirteen dramas attributed to him have been recently discovered and printed. Of these **Pratijna Yaugandharayana** *deals with the same cycle of legend as* **Svapna Vasavadatta.**

LIST OF PERSONS

UDAYANA. King of the Vatsas.
DARSAKA. King of Magadha.
MAHĀSĒNA. King of Ujjayini, father of Vasavadatta.
YAUGANDHARĀYANA } Ministers of Udayana.
RUMANVĀN }
VASANTAKA. Friend of Udayana.
VĀSAVADATTĀ. Queen of Udayana, supposed to be dead.
PADMĀVATI. Second wife of Udayana.
VASUNDHARĀ. Nurse of Vasavadatta.

Udayana, of Bharata's great line, was king of the Vatsas. He was well-skilled in all kingly arts and seemed fairly set upon his throne; but human fortunes, like the spokes in a revolving wheel, rise and fall; he was overwhelmed by

his enemies and, driven from his capital city of Kausambi, took refuge in Lavanaka, a village on the frontiers of his kingdom. Yaugandharayana, his chief minister, who had by warlike prowess and learned counsel, rescued him from a sea of troubles, Rumanvan, the second minister, master of cunning, and others of his counsellors, sought the advice of Pushpakabhadra and other teachers of sacred lore, who declared that if the king took as his second queen, Padmavati, sister of Darsaka, King of Magadha, their master's realm would be re-established.

Since Udayana was deeply attached to his wife, Vasavadatta, daughter of Mahasena, King of Ujjayini, there seemed no hope of such a recovery of his fortunes. Years before, he had been a captive at Ujjayini, where he taught Vasavadatta to play on his magic *vina, Ghoshavati.* Master and pupil fell in love with each other. Without her parent's knowledge she married him and fled with him to Kausambi. He had been very happy in his love and still regarded her as the goddess of his heart, so that, while she lived, he would marry no second wife ; nor could Darsaka be persuaded to give his sister in marriage, except as chief queen.

The ministers, however, hit upon a clever plan to save Kausambi. While Udayana was away hunting, the village of Lavanaka was set on fire ; and the ministers gave out that Vasavadatta had been burnt to death and that Yaugandharayana, in striving to rescue her, had fallen a victim to the flames. When on his return the king heard the news, he endeavoured to end his life in the

still blazing fire, and would have done so, had not his ministers held him back by force. Then clasping those of Vasavadatta's ornaments that were saved from the fire, the king fell into an agony of grief. Rolling on the ground till his body was red with the dust he cried, 'Vasavadatta, my princess, my love, my wife,' and made lamentations such as no lover or *chakravaka* bird parted from his mate ever did. Rumanvan comforted him, shared his master's fasts and lamentations and with him put on the garb of woe. The king would wander through the village and say, 'Here we talked and laughed together, here we told each other tales, here we idled away the time, here we quarrelled, here we renewed our love.' At length the counsellors dragged him and his comforter away by force from the village.

Meanwhile Yaugandharayana had disguised himself as a mendicant, and led Vasavadatta, dressed as a lady of Avanti, to a hermitage in a forest. It was a lovely spot; all round, the antelopes grazed freely without fear of harm; the trees, nurtured kindly, bore flowers and fruits abundantly on their boughs: the land was not tilled, but was wide grass land, on which herds of tawny cows pastured undisturbed. Just as they entered the hermitage, Padmavati was returning from a visit to the queen-mother, who was a votaress of the place. In honour of her visit, her chamberlain announced that Padmavati, the royal maid of Magadha, would bestow her wealth in charity and asked whether anyone lacked the hermit's bowl, the orange robe, or the means to give the offering of thanks to his preceptor, or

wanted any other boon that might be granted by the princess. Yaugandharayana stepped forward, and said, 'I have a boon to ask. I do not need money, or clothes, or beggar's bowl; but I would leave this, my sister, whose husband is away, in the princess' charge for a season, for she is a fit guardian of her honour.'

The chamberlain turned to Padmavati and said, 'Lady, he asks too much. How can we grant it? It is easy to give wealth or life or even one's soul; but to keep a trust is a more difficult thing.' But Padmavati answered, 'Having proclaimed that all might demand boons, it were not proper now to draw back. See, therefore, that what this man wants is done.'

Now Vasavadatta, who knew that Padmavati was destined to be her husband's bride, felt a sisterly love for her. On the other hand, Padmavati saw that Vasavadatta looked noble, perhaps even of royal birth, and observed the courtly modesty with which she veiled her face before strangers.

Then evening fell; the birds retired to their nests; the hermits, after their evening ablutions, lit their fires, the smoke of which rose in many columns above the forest trees. The sun had subdued his rays, turned his car aslant, and sunk slowly behind the summit of the Hill of Sunset. Thereon the two ladies saluted the abbess of the hermitage and, when they had received her blessings, departed to Rajagriha, the capital of Magadha.

Some days after, in the garden of the palace at Rajagriha, near a bower covered with jasmine

creepers. Padmavati was playing at ball. As she chased the ball hither and thither, she looked very fair. Her brow was bedewed and her cheeks were flushed with the exercise. The pendants in her ears gleamed in the brilliant sunlight. Her hands, red with the long exercise, trembled so that she could not control them ; they seemed other hands than hers. Vasavadatta who was watching her, thought her face shone brighter than she had ever seen it and remarked so to her attendant maid, who told her that Padmavati had fallen in love with Udayana for his virtues.

To herself Vasavadatta said, 'It is my lord, my husband, that she loves ;' but aloud, 'Say, maid, for what virtues?'

'For his kindly grace,' answered the maid.

And Vasavadatta thought, 'What else could have won her? 'Twas this that won my heart.'

Turning to Padmavati, the maid asked, 'What if the Prince should prove to be ugly?'

This question surprised Vasavadatta into speech. She cried, 'Oh no, no, no! That could not happen. He is, I know, of noble looks.'

'Lady, how can you know?' Padmavati asked.

Vasavadatta chid herself in silence, 'My eagerness to praise my lord has made me forget myself. What shall I say now?' But she answered, 'Why, so all the people of Avanti declare.'

Then came the young princess' nurse and announced that Udayana was at Rajagriha and that Darsaka had found him so excellent in lineage and wisdom, in youth and beauty, that the king had offered him the hand of his sister ; Udayana, she said, had agreed to marry her. This news

was a hard shock for Vasavadatta to bear; she could not, though it might betray her, refrain from crying, 'How terrible!' The others turned on her and asked her, 'What is terrible?' 'Oh, nothing,' she replied. 'Only, he showed so much grief when he heard of his first wife's death; can he have become indifferent?' 'Lady,' said the nurse, 'the hearts of great and noble men are full of wisdom and hence are soon consoled.'

Another maid-servant entering told Padmavati to hasten, because the marriage rites, as the time was auspicious, would that very day be performed. And Padmavati, followed by the others, rose and left the garden. As they went, Vasavadatta said to herself, 'The more they hasten, the lower sinks my heart.'

Padmavati reached the ladies' apartments, where festive crowds of wedding-guests were already assembled. Leaving her in their midst, Vasavadatta retired to a secluded part of the palace-garden to beguile the sorrow that fate had laid upon her. She soothed herself with thoughts such as these: 'Happy is the *chakravaka* bird; it cannot live after it is parted from its mate. But I may not die; the hope of seeing my lord here keeps up my sorrow-laden soul.' She sat upon a stone bench under a tree, beautiful though unadorned, her face fair as the crescent moon half-hidden by clouds.

While she sat and grieved, a maid came with this message: 'The queen has said, "The lady of Avanti is of noble lineage and kindly and accomplished; let her weave the wedding-wreath."' This was bitterness to the poor lady's heart.

'Was it then ordained that I must do even this? The Gods are pitiless indeed,' she thought. But the maid bade her plait the garland soon, because in the jewelled chamber the matrons were already anointing the bridegroom. Vasavadatta asked whether he had shown himself. The maid replied, 'Yes, he has been seen,' was the answer. 'My mistress has feasted her eyes on him, and I, too, had a glimpse of him.'

'What does he look like?'

'Lady, I will tell you; the peer of him my eyes have never seen. You might call him the God of Love without his bow and arrows.'

'No more. It is not meet to listen to the praises of one who is the husband of another.'

Then taking many sprays of the herb called 'Husband's Life,' she wove them into the wreath, both, as she said to herself, for her own sake and for Padmavati's. Yet she would not put in the herb called 'Rival's Bane.' 'For,' said she to the maid, 'the king's first wife is dead. There is no need of it.' Swiftly she wove the wreath and had finished it by the time the bridegroom, surrounded by matrons, entered the bridal-chamber. The maid taking from Vasavadatta's hands the fresh garland, strangely woven by the wife that was dead and was yet alive, for the new wife of her lord, hastened away with it. And Vasavadatta, in her solitude, mourned, 'Alas! I am left alone here with my grief! My lord is now another's. I will go and seek forgetfulness of sorrow upon my couch, if sleep may visit me.'

It was a rare time of merry-making when the long-wished for wedding of the Vatsa king took

place. For when he was travelling through the dark valley of calamity, his followers thought they would never emerge to the light of joy. But now they basked on the palace balconies and lolled by the fountains in the ladies' court; they had the most delicious of dainties to eat; and life seemed to them a transcript of *Svarga*.

Vasantaka, the king's companion, wearied with this endless round of feasting, had retired to a corner of the palace garden to pass the time, when a handmaid of the palace rushed in, calling his name. He rose and asked her what message she brought for him; the Queen of Magadha, she said, desired to know whether the bridegroom had left the bridal chamber that she might send unguents to anoint him. He straightway rose and went in search of him.

No sooner had he gone than Padmavati and Vasavadatta entered the garden. Round about grew in abundance the *sephalika* flower, upon slender branches that hung like strings of pearl and coral mingled. These Padmavati bade her maid pluck and, while she did so, sat with Vasavadatta upon a stone-bench. When the maid had brought a few flowers, scarlet as flakes of realgar, Padmavati told her to gather no more. Vasavadatta asked the bride, 'Why do you stop her?'

'Because I hope my lord will honour me by visiting this grove and seeing its wealth of blossom.'

'Do you love your lord?'

'I do not know; yet my heart is filled with longing for him when he is not near.'

Vasavadatta said to herself, 'How great the

burden I must hereafter bear, if already she speaks thus of him !'

'The princess,' laughed the maid, 'should have said, "I love my lord." '

'One thing gave me pause.'

'What, tell me, what?' asked Vasavadatta.

'The thought that, as I love him, Vasavadatta must have loved him too.'

'Ay, and yet more.'

'How do you know that, lady?'

Again the poor lady checked herself thinking, 'My eagerness in speaking of my lord has almost betrayed me.' She answered, 'If she had loved him little, she would not have, for his sake, left her home and people.'

'Why, dear lady,' the maid put in, 'should you not, too, as Vasavadatta did, offer to learn from him to play on the *vina*?'

'I have done so,' the princess replied.

'Tell me, what did he say?' asked Vasavadatta with ill-concealed eagerness.

'He said no word, but, sighing deeply, stood silent.'

'What do you divine from this?'

'That my lord, remembering Vasavadatta's virtues, would have wept, but courtesy to me checked his tears.'

Hearing this answer, Vasavadatta comforted her heart with the thought, 'Happy indeed am I, if this be true !'

Meanwhile, Udayana and Vasantaka, conversing together, had entered the garden. Said the King, 'When I was at Ujjayini and first saw the daughter of the Raja of Avanti, all the five darts

of the God of Love pierced my heart, where they still are buried. How, then, could a sixth dart find now a place there?' Vasantaka did not answer the question but said, 'Where is Padmavati gone? To yonder creeper-clad arbour? Or to the stone-seat on this hillock over which trail *asana* flowers like the stripes on a tiger's skin? Or to the wood where grow the pungent *saptaparna* trees? Or to the hill of cedars, the haunt of antelopes and birds?'

Vasantaka looked up and cried, 'See, See, my lord! That line of cranes, in steady flight in the cloudless autumn sky, long, white and lovely, is like Baladeva's out-stretched arm.' The king replied, 'Yes, friend, I see it. The line is now straight, now broken, now waving, now bent like the Great Bear; now across the clear sky as a snake's new-sloughed skin it stretches.'

The maid, too, pointed out to Padmavati the flight of the cranes, white and lovely as a wreath of water-lilies, and, as they looked, they saw the king, but, to avoid his sight, retired into the arbour. Vasantaka observed the gathered *sephalika* flowers and surmised that Padmavati must have come to the garden and passed on. 'Let us then sit' said Udayana 'here on this stone-bench, and wait for her return.' But as the autumn sun was hot, Vasantaka urged the king to enter the bower and rest. To hinder them, the watchful maid shook a hanging bough and brought a swarm of bees about them. Vasantaka would have beaten them back, but the king forbade him, saying, 'These honey-gatherers are faithful to their mates; let not our approach part them and

make them feel, like me, the pangs of separation. Let us rather sit outside.'

This they did, and within the maid remarked to her mistress, 'Lady, we are besieged.'

'It is a happy siege when it is my lord that sits before the gate.'

'Happy for me,' said Vasavadatta to herself, 'when I see my lord in all his manly beauty unimpaired.' And as she wept for joy, the maid said to Padmavati, 'Look, lady, look! The stranger lady's face is wet with tears.' Vasavadatta to hide the truth declared that the wanton bees, shaking pollen from the *kasha* flowers, had made her eyes water.

Outside the bower, Vasantaka, thinking that none else was near, asked the king, 'Which do you love the best, her who was once or her who is your Queen, Vasavadatta or Padmavati?' The king was perplexed and did not answer the question. Vasantaka pressed him asking why he should not reply. Was not one lady dead, and the other too far away to hear his words? Still the king refused to tell him, fearing that Vasantaka, who could hold no secret, would betray his confidence. But Vasantaka said, 'My Lord, I swear, I will reveal to none your avowal. See, I put a padlock on my tongue,' and, putting out his tongue, he bit it. Yet the king refused to tell him. 'Unless you speak,' said Vasantaka, 'you shall not depart from this stone-bench.'

'Well, we must see, it seems, which is the stronger.'

'Nay, be not angry, great Monarch! I beg you by the trust you owe your friend, speak.'

Unable to resist longer, the king said, 'Padmavati I esteem for her beauty, her countless charms of body and soul, but yet her sweetness cannot dissolve the bonds that bind my heart to Vasavadatta'! Within the arbour both ladies heard the words, and each for her own reason rejoiced.

The king, in turn, asked Vasantaka which of the ladies he preferred. Vasantaka replied, 'Tush! What have we to do with idle talk? Both ladies command my high esteem.'

'What Sirrah? You compelled me to reply, and do you now refuse to answer me?'

'What? Must I speak on compulsion too?'

'Yes, on compulsion.'

'Then you shall not hear.'

'Nay, be kind, good friend, and speak in perfect freedom.'

'Well,' said Vasantaka, 'Vasavadatta was a very noble lady for whom I had high respect. Padmavati is young and fair, quiet and modest, sweet of speech and full of kindness. But Vasavadatta had a special virtue—she always came to meet me with an offering of sweetmeat.'

' 'Tis well, Vasantaka. All this Vasavadatta shall not fail to hear.'

'Vasavadatta? Alas! Where is Vasavadatta? She has long been dead.'

'Too true! She is gone. By thy light talk my mind was led astray, and old habit prompted my words.'

His sudden sadness touched Vasantaka who tried to cheer him, saying, 'Be not downcast; there is no fighting against fate. These things are as they are, and there is an end.'



IN THE GROVE

'No, friend, you do not understand. The new love which I hoped would help me to forget my sorrow leads to fresh sorrows by the memories it revives. Such is man's destiny. The mind reaches tranquillity only through tears.' He wept, and Vasantaka rose to fetch water wherewith to wash the tear-stains from his master's cheeks.

From within the bower Padmavati saw the king as he sat weeping, his face covered by his robes, and would have gone away. But Vasavadatta said, 'Do you stay here; it is not right that you should steal away and leave your husband to his tears.' So she departed alone, and Padmavati reached her husband's side just as Vasantaka returned, carrying in his hands a lotus leaf filled with water. Padmavati asked him, 'Vasantaka, what mean my lord's tears?'

'They mean he weeps.'

'But why does he weep? Tell me.'

'The pollen from the *kasha* flowers, blown by the breeze, has made the king's eyes weep. Lady, take this and wash away his tears.' When she had done her task, Udayana regained his spirits and rose and passed on to the palace; and with due feasting and music and all honour to the assembled guests the marriage was celebrated.

The prince spent several months of happy wedded life at Rajagriha; yet he often thought with sad longing of Vasavadatta, whom at Lavanaka the Fire-god had claimed as a sacrifice. One day Vasantaka hastened to him with the news that Padmavati was ill and in sore agony. Udayana, hearing it, lamented, 'I have obtained a wife, fair and of priceless virtue, by whose comfort my

sorrow is being dulled, yet must I now lose her too?' Vasantaka told him that a couch was spread for her under a canopy near the bathing pool, whither the king made haste to soothe her. But when he came he found that the couch had not been pressed; the coverlet was not disarranged; the pillow was smooth and bore no marks of balsam such as is spread on a fevered brow. So he sat upon the couch to await her coming. To beguile the waiting, his mind still harping on his first love, he spoke to Vasantaka of his memories of Ujjayini; how when he left it secretly with Vasavadatta by his side, she remembered the dear ones she left behind, and tears started to her eyes and dropped on his breast. He told him, too, how when he was teaching her to play the *vina,* she would gaze on his face and the plectrum would hang loose from her hand or strike an idle note. As he recounted these memories, sleep overpowered him; seeing which Vasantaka stepped softly away.

In a little while Vasavadatta came to the pavilion, expecting to see Padmavati there, and wishing to comfort her in her illness. She said to herself, 'The Gods are pitiless indeed! Even this Padmavati, in whom my husband found repose in his bereavement, is in pain.' But when she entered the pavilion, she was surprised to see a solitary lamp burning there and no one to keep watch over the sick Queen. And to show her love to Padmavati she sat on the bed near the sleeping form; and as she did so, a strange unwonted joy stole into her heart, and she lay by the side of the sleeper, whose breathing was regular and not as that of one in pain.

The sleeper in his sleep, cried, 'Ah me, Vasavadatta.' The voice was that of her king. She was afraid of discovery and yet she could not move till her hungry heart was fed with more speech from him. The king cried, 'Ah, my love, my darling pupil, speak to me.'

'I do, my lord, I do.'

'What? Are you angry?'

'Not angry, dear love, but very sorrowful.'

'Not angry? Then why have you put off your ornaments?'

'How could I wear them after what has passed?'

Therewith he stretched out his arms to her; but she gently laid them back on the couch and fled lest her secret should be discovered. The king awoke and cried, 'Vasavadatta, stay, ah, stay. I thought I rose in headlong haste and ran against a door that barred my passage. What! is my heart's desire come true?' At that same moment Vasantaka entered, and Udayana said, 'I have joyful tidings for your ears; Vasavadatta lives. Even now she woke me as I was sleeping; even now she went away. Rumanvan lied to me with his tale of her cruel death.' Vasantaka laughed and said, 'When we were talking of Ujjayini and of your late queen, you fell asleep, and must have dreamt of her.'

'If it were a dream,' exclaimed the king, 'how blessed never to have wakened from it! If it be a delusion, may it last for ever!' Vasantaka suggested that the palace was haunted by a spirit called 'the fair lady of Avanti', of whom the king must have had a vision.

'No, no,' said Udayana, 'I was fully awakened from my sleep. I saw her face. Her eyelids were not painted with unguents ; her tresses were hanging loose ; she pressed my arms. The thrill of the vision has not left me yet.' Still Vasantaka would not believe him.

As they walked back to the royal palace the king's chamberlain met them with a message from Darsaka, to say that Rumanvan, the minister, had come with a mighty army and Darsaka's own forces, horse and foot, elephants and chariots, were also ready arrayed for battle ; the seeds of dissension had been sown in the camp of Udayana's foes ; the van of his army had passed the forests and had already won back Vatsa land. The king rose, resolved to vanquish his enemies in the field where the elephants and horses stem the tide of battle and singing waves of arrows break. In the war that followed victory was his.

Thus Udayana, the dayspring of the Vatsa realm, was restored to his lost kingship. One morning, as he walked in his palace on the balcony that fronted the East, he heard a man playing on the *vina,* the sound of which was as that of *Ghoshavati.* Calling the player, he asked him, whence he got the *vina.* The man replied, 'I found it in a clump of jungle grass on the banks of the Narmada. If you desire it, be pleased, sire, to accept it.' The king took it, clasped it to his breast and swooned with his delight. When he came to, he cried, *Ghoshavati* I have found again, but her I shall not find.' He descended from the eastern balcony, saying to the *vina,* 'Utterer of sweet sounds, how could you, whom

my queen held in her hands endure the horrors of the wilderness? Shame on you, *Ghoshavati!* Where is your love that you remember not your mistress? Did you forget how she would raise you in her arms or clasp you to her; or how in her solitude, thinking of me, she made sweet moan; or how tender were her smile and talk in the intervals of music?' Vasantaka strove to check him, bidding him not to afflict himself so with these memories. But the king replied, 'Friend, your counsel is in vain. My love, long suppressed, has by this *vina* again been awakened. But I may not see again her who held it dear.'

Now came to the king from the Court of Mahasena of Ujjayini a herald and with him Vasundhara, Vasavadatta's nurse. The king sent for queen Padmavati, who, when she came, was ready to greet the friends of her lord's late wife, bearing no malice towards them, nor towards the absent parents, of whom she tenderly enquired as if they were her own. Udayana, however, feared that the king of Ujjayini had sent him a message of rebuke for stealing his daughter from the palace of Avanti and for losing her thereafter: nevertheless, he welcomed his father-in-law's messenger, standing as he did so. But the herald begged him to sit, saying that it was his king's command that Udayana should receive his message seated.

'Our monarch gives you joy, sire,' he said, 'that your kingdom, stolen by your enemies, has been restored to your possession.'

'Sir, I owe all to Mahasena's favour. I was his captive and he treated me with kindly love as one of his own sons. I stole his daughter, and

then lost her. Yet, even after tidings of her death, he shows the same affection as before. Truly it is to his favour that I owe it that Vatsa land is once more mine.'

'Grieve not too much for Vasavadatta; thus remembered, she being dead yet lives. Who can stay the hand of death? When the cord is loosed, the pitcher falls into the well. The race of men is like the forest trees; when one is felled, another takes its place.'

The king, turning to the nurse, asked her what message was sent to him by Angaravati, his mother, chief of Avanti's queens, the goddess of the State. The nurse replied:

'This is the message of Angaravati: "Vasavadatta is dead, and you were dear to Mahasena and to me as our own sons; we intended from the first to give to you our daughter; it was for this that you were brought a captive to Ujjayini. Her lessons on the *vina* were a device to throw you together. When you stole away with her to Kausambi, you did but anticipate our wishes. Hence we had the wedding ceremony performed in effigy. Here are the pictures of yourself and Vasavadatta used at the rite. Look on them and relieve your heart." '

No sooner did Padmavati see the picture than she noticed that it was the very image of the lady from Avanti, and asked the king, 'My Lord, is this portrait like the queen?'

'Like her? It is herself to the life. Alas! why should this delicate colouring have suffered from the cruel fire, and these sweet looks have been destroyed?'

The king observed that Padmavati was joyful yet agitated, and asked her why. She replied that there was residing in the palace a lady, who was the living image of the portrait. The king then begged that she should be forthwith brought to his presence. But Padmavati said, 'Sir, she was, before my marriage, left in my charge by a Brahman, who said she was his sister; her husband being absent, she avoids the sight of other men.'

'A Brahman's sister? Then it must be some other person and the resemblance must be due to chance.'

At that moment, there came a messenger to say that at the gate was waiting a Brahman, who claimed the sister that he had left in the queen's charge and was now come to lead her home.

'Let him be brought with the courtesy due to an honoured guest,' said the king, and asked the queen to fetch the lady. Padmavati went and soon returned bringing Vasavadatta veiled to the king's presence. At the same moment, with hesitating steps Yaugandharayana approached. The nurse knew Vasavadatta though veiled, and cried out, 'Why, surely, it is my princess Vasavadatta.' The king bade Padmavati take her to the palace. Yaugandharayana protested that his sister might not be taken there forcibly. Whereupon the king ordered the lady's veil to be removed, and Vasavadatta stood revealed. The king cried, 'Yaugandharayana and Vasavadatta: Is this a reality, or do I dream again? Surely it was thus she lately appeared to me, yet I deemed her a vision!' Yaugandharayana fell at the king's feet and said, 'It is Vasavadatta herself, my lord, and no vision of

the night. For this concealment of the queen the blame is mine. Forgive me, I beseech you.'

'Do I not, oh Yaugandharayana, owe it to your wise policy and your warlike prowess that I was rescued so often from my troubles?'

'I but follow as a servant the fortunes of my lord,' he made answer.

And Padmavati fell at Vasavadatta's feet and said, 'I have transgressed the bounds of right behaviour and treated you unknowingly as one of my handmaids. I implore your pardon.' Vasavadatta raised Padmavati, saying, 'What is there to pardon? I love you and wish you long happiness in a wedded life.' They embraced with tears. All was now happiness at Kausambi; the realm was won back and the lost queen found; and between the two wives peace and love reigned. Shortly Udayana, the king, and Vasavadatta and Padmavati, his queens, set out with pomp to Ujjayini to greet and be welcomed by Mahasena and Angaravati and to live in amity.

THE CLAY CART

[MRICHCHHAKATI]

SUDRAKA

The author of this drama is one Sudra (also Sudraka), who, according to tradition, ruled at Ujjayini till he was 100 years old, then abdicated, and sought release from life in the flames. Nothing more is known about him. It cannot be definitely stated when this play was written; but it could not have been much later than the first century A.D.; for, from the third century, the Bauddha cult declined in popularity.

LIST OF PERSONS

CHĀRUDATTA. A Brahman merchant of Avanti.
RŌHASĒNA. His son.
MAITRĒYA. Friend of Charudatta.
SAMSTHĀṆAKA. Brother-in-law of the king of Malva, in love with Vasantasena.
MATHURA. Keeper of a gambling house.
DARDURAKA. A gambler.
ĀRYAKA. A cowherd, who becomes Raja of Malva, at the end of the play.
SARVILAKA. A Brahman, friend of Aryaka.
VĪRAKA. } Police officers.
CHANDANAKA. }
VASANTASĒNĀ. A beautiful girl of Ujjayini, in love with Charudatta.
MADANIKĀ. Maid of Vasantasena.
PALLAVA. } Servants of Vasantasena.
PARABHRITIKĀ. }

In Avanti lived Charudatta, a Brahman of high rank who had by his great generosity lost all his wealth. But now all was changed ; his daily offerings to the Gods, which once were so lavish that swans and tall storks flocked to his doors to bear them away, were now so poor that they were scarce enough for insects, and, falling amidst the rank grass, became the food of worms.

One evening, when Charudatta had offered his evening oblations and was standing in front of his doorway, his friend Maitreya came to see him and listened to him bemoaning his misfortune. 'The happiness that follows sorrow,' said he, 'is like a bright lamp in the darkness ; but a man that falls from happiness is but a dead soul burdened with a body. Death is better than poverty ; for death means brief suffering, whereas poverty is unending trouble. I do not mourn so much my lost wealth, for riches come and go at the bidding of fate ; but the loss of friends, who, since my poverty, have deserted me, is very hard to bear.'

Now it happened that just then Vasantasena, a beautiful girl of Ujjayini, was passing along the road behind Charudatta's house. She had fallen in love with him and desired to be his wife. But in Samsthanaka, the king's brother-in-law, who loved her, though she could not love him in return, Charudatta had a jealous and a watchful rival. From the terrace of his house, which stood hard by Charudatta's he saw Vasantasena as she passed along with her attendants, and coming down followed her in the hope of a word with her. But she walked fast; and to stop her he cried, 'Stay, Vasantasena, stay ; where are you going that

you run and stumble at every step? Of what are you afraid? There is none to do you harm, least of all I. Stay awhile and hear me speak. My heart is being burnt by love. Why do you run from me? Is it that you are conscious of having stolen my heart?'

Vasantasena, in her loathing, called loudly to her attendants, Pallava and Parabhritika. But when Samsthanaka saw that they were women, he shouted that he would drag them from their mistress by the hair, and with one stroke of his sword cut off Vasantasena's head if she still fled from him. Vasantasena chid him saying, 'Merit and not violence wins love,' and in the dark escaped into Charudatta's house, leaving him foiled outside. He stood and raved, having lost all self-control; he mixed his words and cried that he could hear with his nostrils the scent of her garland spreading through the darkness, but could not see the sound of her ornaments. So stupid is uncontrolled brutality!

He would have followed her, and was entering the outer door, when a maid-servant of the house passed out; and he, imagining in the darkness that she was Vasantasena, in his rage seized her by the hair. The poor wretch's frightened shrieks brought Maitreya, who rushed out stick in hand and recognized Samsthanaka and rated him thus, 'What, Samsthanaka? Is that you, brother-in-law of the King, miscreant and rogue to boot? What though the worthy Charudatta is poor, yet by his virtues he is an ornament to Ujjayini. Do you dare enter his house and ill-treat his people? In misfortune there is no disgrace but in evil deeds

there is shame. A man, however rich, who is guilty of wickedness, merits contempt.'

Samsthanaka became abusive, but Maitreya kept his temper and turned aside the other's words with quip and jest ; and at last Samsthanaka cried, 'Enough. Take my message to that beggar Charudatta :—"The peerless Vasantasena has seen you in the garden of Kamadeva and fallen in love with you. Thereby you are my rival. I have vowed she shall not be yours, and would just now have seized her had she not entered your house. If you deliver her to me you shall escape the law and win my regard ; otherwise I am your enemy till death." Speak this message so that I may hear you from the terrace of my house ; if you do not, I shall crush your head as one crushes a wood-apple between the door and the lintel.' With that he strode off, the very type of the brute.

Meanwhile, Charudatta saw Vasantasena and in the dark mistook her for the nurse, who had taken Rohasena, his son by his first wife, for an evening walk, and said, 'The child has had enough of the evening breeze ; he must not be chilled by the night-damp ; take him in and wrap this cloth about him ;' and as he spoke he tossed his own jasmine-scented upper-cloth to her. Maitreya coming in heard him, and with low speech told him that the lady was not his handmaid but was Vasantasena, who, having seen him in the garden of Kamadeva's temple, had honoured him with her affection. Charudatta did not answer aloud, but said to himself, 'How can I give her love for love when my fortune is thus low? Let me suppress love, as a coward checks the wrath he dare not

utter.' And when Maitreya repeated to him Samsthanaka's message, he turned to the lady and said, 'Vasantasena, I knew you not and, mistaking you for my attendant, offered you indignity; for which I bend my head and beg your forgiveness.' 'Nay', she replied, 'I am the offender, in that I entered a house I am unworthy to enter; it is I that should bow the head in humble supplication.' Watching them, Maitreya laughed and with humorous smile said, 'You two bow your heads, graceful as the grasses of the field bending to the breeze, and seek each other's forgiveness: I too will bow my head, though my neck is stiff as a camel's knee, seeking forgiveness of you both.'

Then Vasantasena, moved by Charudatta's kind manners and pleasant speech, looked up and said, 'Noble Sir, if truly I have found favour in your sight, permit me to leave in your care these my ornaments, to rob me of which the villains from whom I fled, pursued me.' Charudatta accepted the trust, and, calling for lighted torches, escorted her home. As he and Maitreya returned, the torches burnt out; but, as Charudatta inspired to eloquence remarked, the moon shone pale like the cheeks of a love-lorn maiden; its attendant stars lit the path of heaven with divine lamps; its white rays descended through the darkness, like streamlets winding over the miry plain.

Along a street, where stood a deserted temple, came running a barber. He had lost at play ten pieces of gold and being unable to pay fled to hide himself. The temple offered refuge; and when he saw that there was no idol in the shrine, he went

in and sat motionless on the untenanted pedestal. Close behind, in search of him came Mathura, the keeper of the gambling house, and the gambler to whom he had lost the money. Reaching the shrine and seeing the seated figure, the gambler asked Mathura if it was of wood, and the latter, saying, 'Of stone, I think,' shook and pinched the fellow. They knew it was their quarry, but pretended ignorance and, sitting in front of him, began to play. The barber said to himself, 'The rattle of the dice is as tantalizing to the man without a coin, as the sound of a drum to a king without a throne. I must not play, I know. Gambling is as disastrous as being pitched from the top of Mount Meru; and, yet, like the song of the *kokila*, the sound of the dice bewitches.' The players made a pretence of quarrel, one claiming the turn to throw the dice and the other denying his right. So heated was their argument that the barber could not resist the temptation to join, and leaping from his pedestal claimed the throw as his.

Thereon both of them fell upon him and beat him soundly. To escape worse treatment, the rogue offered to pay Mathura half his dues and begged remittance of the other half. When Mathura agreed, he got from the gambler a like promise, and forthwith claimed of both that he was free of the debt, because each had promised to remit a half. 'Not so fast, my friend,' said Mathura, 'We are not to be cheated so easily. Down with the whole sum or it will be the worse for you.' The fellow wept and pleaded that Charudatta, whose servant he was, had lost his fortune and had sent him penniless from his

service. The tale did not satisfy Mathura, who dragged him along the streets intending to sell him as a slave and thus make good the ten gold pieces due to him. On the way another gambler Darduraka by name, met them. He begged Mathura to let the barber off, but failed to move him. Mathura indeed hit his captive on the nose, whereon Darduraka threw a handful of dust into Mathura's eyes. A pretty scuffle ensued; the prisoner shook himself free and fled into a house near by, which was, as it happened, Vasantasena's. Mathura, who ran after him, sat down in front and waited till he should come out.

The barber found his way to Vasantasena's presence and told her this tale of his life: 'I was born, lady, at Pataliputra, where, when I grew up, I followed shampooing as my trade. In the course of my work I heard travellers talk of distant countries and yearned to visit them. It was this curiosity that brought me to Ujjayini. Here I entered the service of a noble Brahman whose equal in charm of figure and courtesy of speech does not exist; he esteems wealth only because it enables him to bestow it on others and to help those who seek his protection. His magnificent bounty. . . .'

'Has made him lavish all his wealth.' Vasantasena broke in. 'Worth and wealth never exist together. That pool alone is full to the brim, whose water is unfit to drink.'

'The name of this great lord all men know;' said the barber, 'all praise him. Having lost his wealth, he discharged me. To make a living, I took to play, but have been unlucky. I have lost

ten pieces of gold, and since I could not pay, the keeper of the gambling house is pursuing me.'

Outside the house Mathura was bawling for his money. Vasantasena heard him, and, out of charity to the pursued, she sent by her maid one of her ornaments to pay the debt. This kindness so worked upon the barber's mind that he straightway forswore gambling and vowed to become a Bauddha ascetic.

Darduraka, meanwhile, fearing the vengeance of Mathura, made off to join the standard of Aryaka, a cowherd, of whom it had been prophesied, that he should become king of Avanti, and to whom people had already begun to flock.

It was past midnight when Charudatta and Maitreya retired to rest. The former had returned from listening to a great vina-player, whose music had stirred his emotion, so that he could not at once sleep. For a while he and Maitreya sat outside in the moonlight and discussed the rival merits of song and instrument; and when the crescent moon had almost set and was gleaming faintly in the darkness, they rose and retired into the house and slept.

When all was quiet, Sarvilaka, a degenerate Brahman who was in love with Vasantasena's maid, Madanika, but lacked the means to offer her his hand, approached the house, creeping along the ground like a snake sloughing his old skin. He was one who had mastered the whole art of thieving; and it was easy for him to make a hole in the wall, and through it, when he had worshipped Kartikeya, the patron deity of thieves, to enter the house. Inside he found Charudatta

and Maitreya sleeping. He passed a lamp over their faces to make sure they were not awake, and, taking from Maitreya's grasp, so gently that he did not stir, the casket containing Vasantasena's jewels, made off with the booty by the door.

Soon after, Charudatta's maid-servant passed through the room, and, finding the door open, gave the alarm. The sleepers awoke to find the casket gone. Charudatta loudly bewailed the loss, for he feared that he would be accused of a betrayal of his trust. As soon as it was daylight, he sent Maitreya with a string of pearls, bidding him tell Vasantasena that he had lost her ornaments recklessly at play and now bitterly repented his folly and begged her to take the pearl-necklace as in some measure a replacement.

Before this message reached Vasantasena, Sarvilaka had taken the stolen jewels and given them to Madanika, Vasantasena's maid whom he loved, that she might purchase her freedom therewith. She asked him how he came by them; when he told her that he had stolen them from Charudatta, she reproached him bitterly and narrated their history to him. He was overcome with remorse and begged her to advise him what he should do about the matter. Loyal to him and to her mistress, she counselled him to pass for Charudatta's servant and to give the ornaments to Vasantasena in Charudatta's name. This he did, and Vasantasena, knowing of the love between him and her maid, graciously set the latter free and bade the two be happy as man and wife.

As they were leaving the house full of their

new happiness, they heard a royal herald proclaim this royal order: 'Let all hear the King's commands! There is a prophecy, it is said, that one Aryaka, the son of a cowherd, shall ascend the throne; wherefore Palaka, the King, deems it good for the safety of the realm to seize and imprison the said Aryaka. Let all men therefore remain in peace at home, where no harm shall befall them.' Now Sarvilaka was of Aryaka's party. When, therefore, he heard of his leader's imprisonment, he took his wife and left her in the care of a close friend and went about to rouse the followers of Aryaka and all those who had been wronged by Palaka, that they might rescue him from the hand of the tyrant, even as the fair moon from Rahu's jaws.

They had not long departed before Maitreya came to Vasantasena's house with the string of pearls. He found her in her lovely garden. Here the trees, bowed down by their load of delicious fruit and hung with silken swings, gave ample shade; the ground was carpeted with sweet scented flowers; a tank full of red lotus blossoms blushed as does the sky at dawn with the first beams of the rising sun; and in the middle of the garden stood an Asoka tree whose crimson flowers suggested a young warrior victorious but bloodstained in the fight. Beneath the tree sat the lady, whom Maitreya thus addressed: 'Lady, Charudatta has lost your golden casket at play and sends you instead this string of pearls.' Vasantasena knew the truth, but loved the sender the more for the lie. When Maitreya had left her, she sat and pondered awhile; then, putting

the garland about her neck, set forth to Charudatta's house.

As it chanced, a heavy storm was gathering in the sky; a stately cloud, girt by the golden lightning even as Kesava in his yellow garb, rolled on: the sparkling rain-drops were as the torn fringes of the silver robes of heaven. Soon clouds scattered before the wind, breaking into multitudinous shapes of cranes and swans, dolphins and monsters of the deep, great dragons and lofty towers. Vasantasena caught by the storm did not take shelter but hastened on. When she reached Charudatta's dwelling, her servant thus announced her coming: 'Ho, there within, go quickly and inform the worthy Charudatta that a lady waits at his gate. Her locks are drenched with rain, her body shaken by the angry tempest, and her anklet-laden feet encumbered with mud.' Maitreya came forth, and welcoming her, led her to Charudatta's presence, who rose to greet her, saying, 'Lady, since you left me, the day has dragged wearily and the night passed in sleeplessness; but now that I once more see your beauty, my cares are over.' And turning to Maitreya he said, 'Maitreya, the rain drops have trickled from the flowers that grace her ears, and bathed her, till she is bright as a prince made ready for coronation. Bring a cloth of finest texture for her to wear.' The robe was brought, and till the attendant had draped her mistress, Charudatta and Maitreya retired. On their return. Maitreya took the maid aside and asked her the object of the visit. 'Since he has lost the jewels at reckless play,' she answered, 'my mistress has brought

a casket of jewels in exchange,' and put into Maitreya's hands the casket which had been stolen the night before. And Vasantasena said to Charudatta, 'Noble Sir, seeing that the casket was stolen, there was no need to replace it with an equivalent.' Just then Rohasena, Charudatta's little son, ran to her in childish grief. His nurse had given him a fragile clay cart to pull about the house; and he was jealous of a little neighbour who had a golden one. Vasantasena to stop his tears gave the nurse some of her own jewels to sell and with the proceeds to buy a gold cart for the boy. The heavens grew black again, and the lightning flashed; fearing a fresh storm, Vasantasena returned with her escort to her own house.

The next morning Charudatta went to the park called Pushpakarandaka, but first sent a carriage to fetch Vasantasena, who had promised to meet him there, and to bring her to that place of public resort. When Vasantasena stepped into the road to see if Charudatta's carriage had arrived, a carriage drew up beside her. It was Samsthanaka's chariot on its way to Pushpakarandaka. Naturally mistaking it for that which she was expecting, she got into it and was slowly driven off.

She had scarcely gone when Aryaka, who had, with Sarvilaka's help, escaped from the prison, came upon the scene, dragging his chain like an elephant that has broken loose. As he reached the house, the carriage that Charudatta had sent arrived, and, Aryaka, seeing a way of escape, jumped into it. The driver did not look round, but, hearing the clanking of Aryaka's chain, which he thought to be the tinkle of Vasantasena's

anklets, drove off without delay. He had gone but little distance before Viraka and Chandanaka, two minions of the King in search of Aryaka, stopped the carriage and demanded to know who was in it. Though the driver declared that Vasantasena was its occupant, Viraka insisted on a search. Chandanaka, therefore, peeped in and saw Aryaka seated within ; but being a friend of Sarvilaka's and secretly attached to the cause of Aryaka, he vowed that Vasantasena was inside and threw his sword to the supposed lady, bidding her use it as a passport. This roused the suspicion of Viraka, who would have made an investigation on his own account ; but Chandanaka picked a quarrel with him, and they fell to blows. Taking advantage of the scuffle, Aryaka, followed by his faithful Sarvilaka at a distance, made good his escape.

While these events were happening, Charudatta was waiting seated on a stone-bench in the garden of Pushpakarandaka, where the trees, like merchants exhibiting their wares, displayed their clustering flowers. He was impatient for the arrival of Vasantasena's carriage. At last it came, but Aryaka jumped out. He was in sorry plight ; yet dust-stained and fettered as he was, his great strength and nobility of bearing were plain. Charudatta forgot his disappointment, and out of sympathy with Aryaka's cause and pity for his condition bade his servant strike the fetters from him, and urged him to drive on in his carriage, so that he might pass unsuspected beyond the boundaries of Avanti. He bade him depart with all haste, for Palaka's guards were scouring the

city for him. When Aryaka had taken his advice and thanked him and driven on, he too resolved to leave the garden, lest Palaka's spies should find out the part he had taken in helping the prisoner to escape. He cast the fetters into a deep well and walked slowly from the garden. She, whom he had expected, had not come, whereat he was disappointed; and as he went, ill-omens, such as a throbbing in his left eye and a Bauddha mendicant who crossed his path, seemed to forebode disaster, so that he left the garden with a heavy heart.

Not long afterwards, Samsthanaka, the King's brother-in-law, came to the same pleasure-garden and sat down to meditation on Vasantasena's beauty. While thus he was engaged, his carriage entered slowly. Seeing her arrive, Samsthanaka imagined that she had come to meet him and thus addressed her, 'Listen, lady, to my prayers; with your lotus eyes behold me thus lowly stretched at your feet, seeking your favour with hands uplifted. Forgive, most graceful maid, the fault that, urged by my love for you, I have committed, and take me as your slave.' But Vasantasena replied, 'Get from my sight, scoundrel; your visage is hateful to me,' and in her anger and disgust, she spurned him with her foot. This was more than Samsthanaka could endure, and bursting into sudden rage, for his love was gross and arrogant, not humble as true love should be, he cried, 'Get down, woman, from my carriage. To meet your lover, that beggar's brat, do you use my oxen? Come down directly; else with these hands, will I drag you thence by the hair of your head.' At

this she stepped from the carriage, and Samsthanaka turned once more to entreaty. 'I will give you gold; I will lavish tenderness on you; I will lay my head at your feet. If you still disdain me and do not accept me as your slave, what more has the world for me?' But she scorned him the more. 'Your pretended love I loathe, vile wretch, your gold cannot tempt me. The bees do not fly away from the lotus-bloom, though its petals are damaged; nor will I be a traitor to merit, though its possessor be poor.' At this his rage revived and passed beyond all bounds; he seized her by the throat, strangled her as he thought, and, having covered her body with dry leaves, went back to the tyrant's court.

He had not long gone before the barber, now a Bauddha mendicant, entered the garden, and having bathed, spread his yellow robe to dry on the heap of leaves beneath which lay Vasantasena. He sat near by, chanting verses of good counsel and thinking with gratitude of her who was the cause of his reformation. Suddenly, as he meditated, he heard a sigh coming from beneath the dead leaves. He stopped his chant to listen. At first, he thought it was a mere crackling of the leaves that his wet robes had damped, as they dried under the hot sun. But soon a woman's hand, adorned with jewels, appeared, and then another hand. Hastily he drew away the cloth and scattered the leaves and found beneath the lady Vasantasena who had saved him from his misery. Pressing the wet cloth to her brow and fanning her with a leafy branch, he brought her out of her swoon; and she clinging to a creeper

that festooned the tree above drew herself up. He did not question her, for she needed rest, but led her to the abode of a nun near by, to whose care he left her.

The court of justice had been swept clean and all was ready for the Judge's session. To it came Samsthanaka well-groomed and graceful in his mien, villain though he was; he sought vengeance on Charudatta, charging him before the Judge with the death of Vasantasena. Soon after the Judge entered with the *Sreshthi*, the head of the merchants on one side and the *Kayastha*, the Recorder, on the other side and sat on the throne of judgment. When the Officer of the Court, by the Judge's command, shouted, 'Who waits to demand justice?' Samsthanaka advanced and said, 'I demand justice; I, the brother-in-law of the Raja, have a plaint to prefer.' 'There are other pressing causes,' the Judge replied, 'and Samsthanaka's plaint must wait for another day.' But Samsthanaka, the bully, used threats to get his way; he would complain to the King that he, the King's brother-in-law, had been cavalierly treated, and would procure the Judge's dismissal. The Judge, afraid to lose his place, obsequiously agreed to take Samsthanaka's case forthwith, offered him a seat and asked what his plaint was. 'My noble brother-in-law,' said he, 'of his good pleasure, presented me for my use and recreation, the chief of the royal gardens, the ancient Pushpakarandaka, which it is my practice to visit every day and see swept clean and weeded and kept in proper trim. Going there to-day, according to custom, I saw—I could scarcely

believe my eyes—the dead body of a woman, the pride of our city. Doubtless rich attire tempted some vile wretch to beguile her into the lovely garden, where for her jewels she was strangled.'

The Judge sent the usher for her mother, who having come, declared that her daughter had gone to the house of Charudatta, son of Sagaradatta, and grandson of Vinayadatta. So Charudatta was summoned, at the sight of whom Samsthanaka, ever unable to control his jealous rage, burst out, 'Murderer, could you slay a maid so famous as Vasantasena and rob her of her jewels and think the murder would remain hid?' Charudatta, who knew nothing of the charge retorted, 'What madness is this?' The Judge, intervening, asked him, whether he loved Vasantasena, and when he admitted that he did, bade him say where Vasantasena was at that moment. 'She is gone home,' said he, 'What more can I say?' But Samsthanaka again burst out, 'What more? Why, did you not go to my garden Pushpakarandaka, and there, for the sake of her rich ornaments, pauper and robber that you are, strangle her with your own hands? How dare you say, "She is gone home?"' Charudatta in wrath replied, 'May these lies parch thy lips, as the lotus is shrivelled in winter.' Vasantasena's mother, championing him, broke in, saying that the charge must be false, for, very recently, her daughter in distress had entrusted Charudatta with a casket of jewels; when it was stolen, Charudatta had replaced it with a necklace of great price. 'Such a man,' said she, 'would not murder her for such a reason.'

At this stage Viraka rushed into the court; he

would not wait for permission to speak, but cried, 'Listen, O Judge, to my urgent complaint! This morning watching with Chandanaka for Aryaka who had escaped from jail, we stopped a covered carriage; the driver said that it was Charudatta's, who had sent it to fetch Vasantasena to meet him in Pushpakarandaka. When I would have searched it, Chandanaka dragged me back, cuffed and kicked me.' 'Go,' said the Judge, 'speedily to Pushpakarandaka and see whether the body of a murdered woman is there.' So Viraka went, and presently came back with the report that a woman's body had certainly lain there, but that it had been carried away by beasts of prey; nevertheless he had seen remains of her hair, and her footprints were clear.

Meanwhile, Charudatta's nurse had scruples about buying a gold toy-cart for her charge with the jewels given her by Vasantasena and had given them to Maitreya who went out to return them to the lady. Hearing on the way that Charudatta had been summoned by the Judge, he went to the court where he was apprised of Samsthanaka's charge. 'What' he cried, 'what folly is this to charge with so vile an act one who has beautified our city with its chief ornaments, who has filled Ujjayini with gardens, gateways, convents, temples, wells and fountains? And you Samsthanaka, vile wretch, the King's brother-in-law though you are, ape tricked out with gold ornaments, dare you say to me that my friend, who never plucked a flower roughly in his life, who never pulled more than one flower at a time, but left the young buds untouched, is guilty of

such a crime? A curse on you in both worlds! If you dare utter such a lie, I will break your head into a thousand pieces.' And he leaping upon Saṁsthanaka, there arose a scuffle between them, in which Vasantasena's jewels fell out of Maitreya's girdle. The scuffle was stopped, and Maitreya, questioned by the Judge, admitted that they were Vasantasena's, and that he had brought them from Charudatta's house. This was enough evidence for the Judge, who concluded that Charudatta's guilt was proved. He sent a message to Palaka, the King, saying that, since Charudatta was a Brahman, he might not, according to the Law of Manu, be put to death, but that he might be banished the kingdom with his property untouched. The King, however, ordered that Vasantasena's jewels should be hung round the neck of the criminal, and that he should be led to the southern cemetery with the beat of drum and there impaled.

Charudatta, hearing this cruel and unjust sentence, turned calmly to Maitreya, whom he begged to be a father to his child and to bring him for a last embrace before he was executed. On the king he pronounced this curse:—'Had due investigation been allowed me, or had I been put to the ordeal of water or of poison, of weighing or of fire, and I had failed the test, then had my doom been deserved! But the sentence that sends a Brahman to death on the mere word of a malicious enemy will surely bring just punishment on the king that utters it and on his line.' He said no more, but walked forth between his guards, with noble bearing and undisturbed, to the place of execution.

On either side of him was an executioner; his limbs were loaded with gloomy flowers emblematical of death; about him carrion birds circled. From time to time the procession was halted, a drum beaten, and the following public proclamation made:—'Listen, all men! This is Charudatta, son of Sagaradatta, son of Sreshti Vinayadatta by whom Vasantasena has been robbed and murdered; he has been convicted and condemned by King Palaka to be impaled. Even so does His Majesty punish those guilty of such crimes as both worlds abhor.' People poured forth to see the good man upon whose head the axe of destiny was to fall. Even the executioners grieved to lay low the tree that had given such generous shelter. So general was the sorrow that it seemed the whole city was under sentence. One man said, 'Does the sky weep, or the thunderbolt fall without a cloud?'

Charudatta inwardly bemoaned the cruelty of fate. He thought how his fathers had performed costly rites of sacrifice, and in their honour the holy hymns had been chanted in sanctuaries by crowds of Brahmans; yet he, the son, was to die a criminal, his good name blackened by a lying charge. While he thought these sad thoughts, his son Rohasena was brought to him by Maitreya. The procession stopped while Charudatta embraced the child; he said, 'These little hands are too small to sprinkle the last drops on my funeral pyre, and I must, in the next world, suffer long from thirst.' He then put on the child his sacred cord, the ornament of the Brahmans, made neither of gold nor pearls, with which oblations

are offered to the gods and to the spirits of dead ancestors.

The sad scene was ended by a brutal executioner, who roughly said, 'Come, Charudatta, enough of this; we cannot wait.'

'Where are you leading my father?' the little boy demanded.

'My son,' the father said, 'wearing a chaplet of oleanders, and carrying my doom upon my shoulders and sorrow in my heart, I go to the place of execution, even as a goat to the sacrificial hall.' And Rohasena, turning to the guards, cried, 'Why do you want to slay my father? Take and slay me and let my father go.' Charudatta could not choose but weep as he embraced his son, and said, 'Love is the truest wealth; it smiles equally on the rich and the poor. It is a greater balm to the heart than sandal paste or fragrant herb to the body.' Then bidding his son go to some *asrama*, where he would not suffer from his father's evil fate, and saying farewell to his friend Maitreya, he told the executioners to lead on.

Samasthanaka now joined the party. He came, as one of the executioners remarked, like a mad ox, butting with the sharp horn of arrogance. He noticed that the people murmured their disbelief in the charge against Charudatta. Even the executioners would have delayed the execution as long as they could. With vengeful malice he rated them and bade them hasten to make an end of their prisoner. They came at last to the southern cemetery, where ghoulish jackals feasted on the flesh of poor wretches impaled. Just as the last proclamation of the sentence was being made,

Vasantasena and the Bauddha mendicant reached the place. Hearing the proclamation, Vasantasena rushed through the crowd with dishevelled hair and uplifted arms, almost shrieking, 'Forbear, forbear, in me you see the murdered woman for whom he dies.' Samsthanaka saw that his plot had failed and that his lies had come home to roost, and, being terrified by this apparition of the woman whom he thought he had strangled, fled as from a ghost. The guards, glad to be freed from a duty they loathed, pursued him and left their late prisoner to his friends.

Charudatta exclaimed, 'Who has come here, welcome as fresh showers to crops smitten with drought, to save me from the drawn sword and the jaws of death? Is this a second Vasantasena? Or, has she, who once lived, come down from heaven? Is this an illusion? Or is my Vasantasena yet alive?' And Vasantasena fell at his feet and said, 'I am she, who is the cause of this sad check to your honoured course.' She wept bitterly, but Charudatta soothed her, saying, 'Away with grief, my love. You are to me the very herb that brings the dead back to life.'

At that moment a loud cry was heard as of a crowd shouting, 'Victory to Aryaka, who has chastised the mighty foe, and become the monarch of the earth!' and shortly Sarvilaka entered and said, 'I have slain Palaka the tyrant, and have anointed Aryaka as King. His first command is that you, Charudatta, be released.' By this time the guards had caught the fugitive Samsthanaka and, followed by a howling mob, were dragging him to the place of execution. But Charudatta

interceded for him; his happiness was too great for thoughts of vengeance, and by his forgiving appeal he won for his late enemy liberty.

The throng shortly dispersed, some to celebrate the downfall of Palaka and some to lead Charudatta joyfully home, where the emblems of shame and death on his person were quickly exchanged for the bridegroom's garb. Instead of the drum of death, the cheerful sound of the marriage trumpet was heard; for Charudatta took Vasantasena as his wife, and lived to be an ornament to Ujjayini for many years.

THE MINISTER'S SIGNET

[MUDRA RAKSHASA]

VISAKHADATTA

About Visakhadatta, the author of this drama, absolutely nothing is known. From a reference to the Emperor Chandra, it may be inferred that this play was written for production before Chandra II, of the Gupta dynasty, who reigned at the end of the Fourth Century A.D.

LIST OF PERSONS

CHANDRAGUPTA. King of Magadha.
PĀRVATĒSA. A hill-king.
MALAYAKĒTU. Son of Parvatesa.
VAIRŌDHAKA. Brother of Parvatesa.
CHĀNAKYA. Minister of Chandragupta.
RĀKSHASA. Minister of the Nandas and devoted to their cause.
JĪVASIDDHI. ⎫
NIPUNAKA. ⎬ Agents of Chanakya.
SIDDHĀRTHAKA. ⎪
BHĀGURĀYANA. ⎭
ŚAKATA DĀS. A scribe, friend of Rakshasa.
CHAṆDANA DĀS. Jeweller, friend of Rakshasa.

Chanakya was a Brahman, well-skilled in policy. Once on a ceremonial occasion, he sat on one of the seats of honour reserved for learned Brahmans in the presence of Nanda, King of Magadha, but was, by order of that arrogant king,

thrust ignominiously from his seat for his presumption and banished from the royal presence. Leaving the court, he straightway untied the top-knot on his head and vowed that it should hang like a snake and signalize his venomous hatred till he should destroy the whole tyrant race of Nanda. To this end he organized a confederacy to dethrone Nanda and his sons and make Chandragupta, the Maurya, Emperor of Magadha. Through his agency, Parvatesa, a powerful hill-chief became Chandragupta's ally, and these two helped by Chanakya, gathered Sakas, Yavanas, hillmen, fierce Kambojas, the tribes who lived beyond the western rivers and hordes of Persians into an army that poured on Pataliputra, the capital of the Kingdom of Magadha, in a devastating flood.

Rakshasa, the minister, devoted to the race of Nanda, did all he could to resist; he lined the walls of the city with archers, planted elephants at the gates, drew up the foot-soldiers in firm array and charged the foe with wave after wave of noble horsemen. But in vain: the fire of Chanakya's wrath blazed like a meteor over the forest of his foes. King Nanda was cast from his throne, as from the crest of a mountain the lordly elephant is hurled down by the angry lion. Nanda was slain, and with him all his sons but one, named Sarvarthasiddhi. This last remaining shoot of Nanda's stem, grieved at the suffering of the people, gave up further opposition, left the city secretly and assumed the garb and took to the life of an ascetic. But while one of the line remained, Chanakya had not fulfilled his vow;

relentlessly, therefore, he had Sarvarthasiddhi pursued till he too was slain.

The royal army, since it was bereft of its lord, relaxed its efforts and ceased to oppose the victorious Chandragupta, who entered the capital city with loud fanfare of trumpets proclaiming his victory and kingship. Rakshasa, ever faithful, retired to a distant province, where the authority of Nanda, though he was slain, still prevailed.

Though Chanakya's vow was accomplished, he could not end the conflict till the arms that had uprooted Nanda should plant Chandragupta's fortune as firmly as the sweet-smelling lotus is rooted in the lake. For Rakshasa's inflexible faith survived the ruin of the race he had served. Common men, whose motives are mercenary, obey their lords for profit; and if their faith holds in times of adverse fortune, it is because they hope that the future will bring back power and wealth. But Rakshasa, regardless of reward and spurred on only by remembered kindness, laboured unweariedly in the perilous service of a master who lived no more to recompense his efforts. He devised an engine of destruction, called 'the poison-maid' (*visha-kanya*) and sent it against Chandragupta. But as Krishna craftily warded the shaft of Karna from the breast of Arjuna, making it fall on Ghatotkacha, so Chanakya cunningly contrived that the intended doom should fall on Parvatesa the barbarian king, and that Chandragupta be freed of his ally. Parvatesa's son, Malayaketu, in alarm, fled to Rakshasa's camp.

Chanakya persuaded Vairodhaka, Parvatesa's

brother, that the death of the hill-king was not of his own or Chandragupta's doing, and promised that Nanda's empire should be divided equally between him and Chandragupta and that they should be installed as co-equal kings. Thereupon he called the architects together and gave them orders to prepare the palace forthwith for Chandragupta's reception at the hour of midnight, the most auspicious time as determined by the stars. Daruvarma, the head of the guild of architects who was secretly allied with Rakshasa, said that, anticipating Chanakya's desires, he had completed the decoration of the outer gateway and the rest would soon be done. But Chanakya suspected that Daruvarma's readiness concealed some evil project, and, to defeat its accomplishment, arranged that Vairodhaka should be installed before his fellow-king, Chandragupta, and should enter the city at the hour fixed. So it was done; Vairodhaka, clothed in mail, over which were thrown robes of richest dye, and wearing a string of pearls as pure as snow about his neck, the imperial crown circling his brow, a wealth of garlands and chains of gold and precious stones resting upon his breast, adorned so lavishly that to discover his identity was well-nigh impossible, mounted Chandragupta's elephant, and, attended by Chandragupta's guards, entered the city.

Now Rakshasa had with Daruvarma woven a plot by which the latter, at the very moment that Chandragupta entered the city, should let fall the arch upon his head, and Barbaraka, the driver of the imperial elephant, should complete the work by stabbing the king. But it happened that just

as the elephant approached the archway, Barbaraka drew a dagger hidden in a golden staff he had, and the elephant, imagining that it would be stabbed, sprang quickly forward. The spring that held the arch was loosed a second too soon, so that the structure fell upon Barbaraka and crushed not Vairodhaka but him. Daruvarma, fearing that his plot was thus revealed, seized an iron rod and smote Vairodhaka to the earth. Thus Vairodhaka, as was his brother, was slain and removed from Chandragupta's path. But Daruvarma was stoned to death by the angry mob.

Rakshasa, not to be averted from his design, induced Abhayadatta, the royal physician, to mix with the royal drink, when it was served to him in his golden goblet, a deadly poison. But Chanakya, ever watchful, observed the strange colour of the draught and, forbidding the king to taste it, forced the physician to swallow his own dose. Rakshasa had also in his pay the Royal Chamberlain, Pramodaka, to whose charge he entrusted large sums of money, wherewith to bribe the imperial guard. This, too, Chanakya discovered and asked Pramodaka whence he obtained the money he so lavishly spent. Pramodaka, being unable to account to Chanakya's satisfaction for his sudden wealth, was condemned to a sudden death.

Rakshasa, not discouraged by these failures, tried yet another means to destroy the conqueror. Leading to the room of the pavilion in which Chandragupta slept, was a subterranean passage; the implacable Rakshasa, who knew of this, prevailed on certain daring spirits, adherents of his

cause, to hide themselves there, that at dead of night they might break in on the king, slay him and bear away his corpse. But again the plot was foiled by the watchfulness of Chanakya; for one day, when, as was his wont, before the king retired to rest, he entered the chamber to inspect it with diligent scrutiny, he noticed that a line of ants was coming through a crevice in the wall bearing fresh fragments of human food. He quickly argued that men must be concealed in the secret passage, and commanded that the pavilion should be set on fire immediately; whereby the would-be assassins were burnt to death. Thus every messenger of death that Rakshasa sent was averted from Chandragupta by Chanakya.

But Rakshasa did not desist. He was not working for reward; in him intellect and courage were joined to faithful devotion to his cause. His was a spirit constant in adverse as in prosperous fortune. He therefore inflamed the mind of Malayaketu against Chandragupta and promised him, if he would help to overthrow Chandragupta, a moiety of the Nanda empire. He induced Chitravarma, king of Kuluta, Nrisimha, king of Malaya, Pushkaraksha, king of Kashmir, Sindhusena, lord of the Indus Valley and Meghakhya, king of Persia, to take up arms and join Malayaketu in alliance against the usurper. Rakshasa, besides, spent his immense wealth and used his great influence to induce Chandragupta's servants to desert him. Bhadradatta, head of the Elephant Brigade, Purushadatta, Master of the Horse, Bindurata, nephew of the Chamberlain, Balagupta,

the king's cousin, Rajasena, tutor of the young prince, Bhagurayana, the younger brother of the Commander-in-Chief, Rohitaksha, prince of Malva and Vijayavarma, chief of the Kshatriyas, through Rakshasa's persuasion went over to Malayaketu's camp. Nor did Chanakya strive to hinder them from going, for he feared lest, by frequent punishment of the disaffected, he should alienate the sympathy of the mass of the king's subjects. But he set about devising means to compel Rakshasa to desist from enmity and to bring him to be Chandragupta's loyal servant.

Thus to find out who were yet covert friends of the Nandas and Rakshasa, he made use of spies skilled in tongues and able to play various parts in life. One such was Indusarma, who, disguised as a Bauddha monk and astrologer, under the name of Jivasiddhi, worked himself into Rakshasa's confidence. To cover his design he charged him with supplying the 'poison-maiden' that killed Parvatesa and ordered his banishment from Pataliputra.

Another spy, Siddharthaka, was fastened on Sakata Das, a scribe and Rakshasa's particular friend, to whom he pretended great attachment and thereby wormed out his secrets and conveyed them to Chanakya. The minister issued a proclamation that Sakata Das was, under Rakshasa's orders, stirring up plots against the royal person and sentenced him to be impaled and his family put in chains. At the same time he gave secret instructions to Siddharthaka to attack the executioners as they were about to impale Sakata Das, to rescue him and flee with him to Rakshasa.

Chanakya sent also a spy, Nipunaka by name, to Pushpapura, where resided Chandana Das, another friend of Rakshasa and the head of the guild of jewellers of that city. The first discovery of this spy was that Rakshasa had entrusted his wife and family to the custody of Chandana Das. Disguised as a beggar, an exhibitor of the picture of Yama, he stood before the jeweller's home and sang a ballad; shortly a little boy of five rushed out to hear the song; and was followed by a lady, who fetched the child back into the house. A signet-ring, too large for her finger, slipped off and rolled near the spy's foot. He picked it up unobserved; it was Rakshasa's own signet! This was indeed a find that the spy made all haste to report to his master.

Chanakya forthwith had Chandana Das dragged before him, charged him with giving shelter to the wife and children of the rebel minister and called upon him to give them up; and when the jeweller vowed that they had left his house, he tried persuasion, bidding him reflect that fortune had deserted the following of Nanda and that further loyalty to a lost cause was as vain as to seek to rend with the naked hands a lion's jaws, dyed with the blood of a newly-slain elephant. At this point messengers, as pre-arranged, entered with the news that Jivasiddhi had been banished with every mark of contumely, and that Sakata Das was being led to execution. But Chandana Das did not yield, for, though the minister promised him full pardon if he gave up those to whom he had given shelter, he would not move from his sworn word that they had departed from his

protection. By this obstinacy Chanakya was enraged and had him, with all his family, seized and thrown into prison.

These events made Rakshasa feel that all his labour was in vain, and all that he might scheme was foredoomed to failure. Fortune, he thought, the fickle goddess seated on the lotus throne, had clearly gone over to the side of Chandragupta, the tiger's cub whom Nanda had reared. He might forgive the usurper, but for Chanakya who had destroyed the Nandas with cunning's-shaft he had ardent hatred and burned to strike him low. While he was in this unhappy train of thought, Jajali, Chamberlain of Malayaketu, brought him presents of jewels from his master, who was concerned to see that in mourning for his former monarch Rakshasa was regardless of his garb. He courteously replied—for Rakshasa was ever the courtier—that though in the sight of Malayaketu's high merit he could not remember the virtues of Nanda, yet, till his efforts to seat his new lord upon the golden throne were successful, he could not adorn his own person. Nevertheless as the gift was Malayaketu's first favour, he accepted the jewels.

Not long after this, Sakata Das and his rescuer, Siddharthaka, entered and made him obeisance and gladdened him with the tale of his rescue. Siddharthaka took this opportunity to return to him the signet-ring, which surprised him, for Rakshasa could not imagine how the signet which he had left with his wife to comfort her during his absence could have come into Siddharthaka's possession, and he asked whence he got it.

Siddharthaka truthfully replied that he had found it at Chandana Das's door. He had recognized it, he said, and brought it as proof of his attachment to Rakshasa's cause.

Rakshasa's next step was to send to Pataliputra men who should strive to poison Chandragupta's mind against Chanakya. This, the latest device of Rakshasa, was, however, clear as crystal to that artful man of state. He straightway advised Chandragupta to pretend displeasure with the minister and to profess to rule without his aid. The king, who felt for his minister the deep reverence of a pupil for his guru, unhesitatingly took his advice and seemed to change his attitude from confidence to displeasure and distrust.

It was the day of the feast of the autumn full-moon. The Emperor walked on the terrace roof of his palace to view the usual decorations of the city at this season. He expected bright chowries and festoons of flowers to hang from glittering pillars and curling smoke of incense to twine round them, and the streets to be sprinkled with blossoms and perfumed waters. But though the skies were fair, flecked only by fleecy clouds, as a sea by scattered isles of sand, the city was dreary and bore no marks of rejoicing. The king asked his attendants why it was thus immersed in gloom, and was told that Chanakya had counter-manded the festival. He sent for Chanakya and demanded of him an explanation for thus crossing the royal will. The scene was well acted, for at that very moment Rakshasa's emissaries sang in the streets a ballad, urging kings not to let royal behests be overridden. Chandragupta, summoning the

minstrels, ordered a handsome reward to be given to them.

But Chanakya countermanded the order and, turning to the King, asked, 'How have they deserved such a prodigal gift?'

And the King replied, 'If Your Excellency should thwart thus even my casual orders, my throne must be but a prison to me.'

'If I displease you, sire, take your own authority into your own hands.'

'So shall I do; but first I would be told why you forbade the festival.'

'Your Majesty would do well to leave the decision of such matters to him who placed the royal sceptre in your hands.'

'I thank no mortal for my sceptre. Destiny gave it to me.'

'Sire, shallow men ascribe to destiny what human wisdom has wrought.'

'Chanakya, the truly wise do not indulge in idle vaunts.'

'Enough! I see your royal aims. You seek to trample on me because you think your need of me is past. Rather than endure such insult, I surrender my dagger of office.'

The matter ended with a proclamation by the King that he had dismissed Chanakya from his ministership, and that henceforth he would himself manage the affairs of state without any man's aid.

Meanwhile Bhagurayana, who was really Chanakya's agent, though a pretended rebel, had worked his way to the position of Malayaketu's confidant and was poisoning that hill-chieftain's

mind and endeavouring to sow dissensions between him and Rakshasa. The soil was prepared, for Malayaketu was fretting because nine months had passed since his father was murdered, yet no vengeance had been taken on the murderers. Bhagurayana suggested that Rakshasa had no heart in fighting Chandragupta ; was not Chandragupta, he asked, after all a scion of the Nanda stock to which Rakshasa was so much attached? Besides, he urged, it was Chanakya whom he hated, not Chandragupta ; and if the haughty Chanakya was dismissed, Rakshasa would doubtless desert Malayaketu's cause and seek to take Chanakya's place as minister. Hence, Bhagurayana added, himself and other nobles who had abandoned Chandragupta would rather deal direct with Malayaketu than through the mediation of Rakshasa.

The seed of suspicion grew. Malayaketu one day came on Rakshasa as he was giving audience to a courier and chanced to overhear the latter tell how Chanakya had countermanded the autumn festival without the Emperor's knowledge, and how the Emperor incensed thereat had dismissed his minister ; and Rakshasa, hearing of Chanakya's dismissal, uttered a cry of joy that the suspicious prince quite misinterpreted. Yet when Rakshasa proposed that the confederate army he had raised should set forth at once, while yet the breach between Chandragupta and Chanakya was unhealed, Malayaketu was delighted with the prospect of action, and with the thought that his elephants would soon drink the dark waters of the sea and echo back the roaring of its waves.

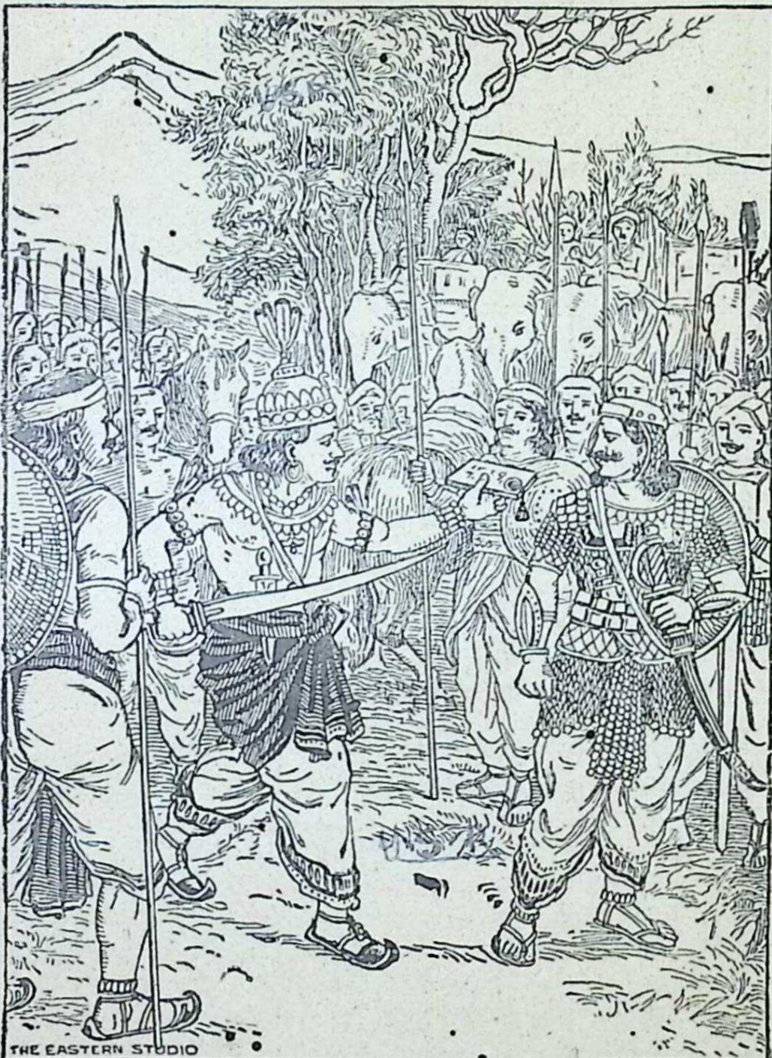
But his mind was still perplexed. He could not decide whether he could rely on Rakshasa's faith now that Chanakya was no more Chandragupta's minister, or it would be more prudent to regard him as a dangerous foe. His mind was whirling like a potter's wheel and could not settle at any fixed point. To make matters worse Jivasiddhi, who posed as Rakshasa's friend, entered the prince's camp and in his hearing told Bhagurayana, as if by chance, but with the intent of being overheard, that Parvatesa's death was not the work of Chanakya, but of Rakshasa, who wanted to crown Sarvarthasiddhi and regarded Parvatesa as the main impediment and a deadlier foe than Chandragupta. On hearing this, Malayaketu's first impulse was to kill Rakshasa. But Chanakya had given strict injunctions to Jivasiddhi and Bhagurayana not to imperil the life of Rakshasa. Bhagurayana therefore appeased the hill-chief's anger by pointing out that it would be impolitic to kill Rakshasa before he secured the realm of Nanda and that Rakshasa could be got rid of after their expedition was crowned with success.

Then another of Chanakya's cunning stratagems bore fruit. Siddharthaka, a seeming friend of Rakshasa, attempting to leave the camp without a passport, was caught, and on him was found a letter, which said that, if proper rewards were forthcoming, dominions, gold, elephants and the spoils of war, enemies would transfer their attachment. This cryptic offer, the letter said, Siddharthaka would explain. The letter, in truth, had been drafted by Chanakya ; it had been copied by Sakata Das, the scribe, to whom its meaning was

dark, and sealed by Chanakya with Rakshasa's seal, brought to him by Nipunaka from Chandana Das's house. Siddharthaka, bidden to explain the meaning of the letter, refused to do so; but being flogged by the orders of the prince said that the letter was from his friend Rakshasa to Chandragupta and contained the offer that his allies, the kings of Kuluta, Malaya and Kashmir, if properly rewarded, would desert Malayaketu's cause. The latter was now convinced that Rakshasa had tampered with the loyalty of his allies.

At this juncture there came from Rakshasa orders concerning the disposition of the troops on the immediate march on Pataliputra; his own men were to form the van, the Sakas, Yavanas and Hunas the centre, and Malayaketu, surrounded by the troops of the allies, was to bring up the rear. To Malayaketu the object of the disposition was but too clear; it spelt plain treason on Rakshasa's part. Hastening to the presence of Rakshasa, he confronted him with the letter captured from Siddharthaka. What could Rakshasa say? The letter was sealed with his seal and written in Sakata Das's hand. Though he saw clearly that it was another devilish snare laid by Chanakya, he could not disprove this apparent act of treason on his part. Malayaketu, in high and not unreasonable rage, departed and issued orders to his general for the capture of the allied princes, some to be buried alive, and others to be trampled by elephants. Rakshasa he displaced from his command and declared that he would march alone on Pataliputra.

Malayaketu's savage orders were carried out,



THE ARTFUL LETTER

but had an evil effect, for panic spread in the invading host. In the ensuing battle, his followers abandoned him, and returned to their countries; and he, left unsupported, was taken prisoner. Chanakya, the victory won, was publicly restored to his post as minister and shortly secured the scattered fragments of the enemy-host.

Rakshasa, seeing that all was lost, left his camp during the confusion of these events, and, unobserved, entered Pataliputra. Fate had not ceased working against him, had defeated all his schemes and favoured Chanakya in all his doings. He surrendered all his hopes of the usurper's overthrow. He but wanted to gain some tidings of his friend Chandana Das; it was for this that, covered with shame and dreading detection, he crept into a dark grove. There, on a marble seat, cracked as were his fortunes, he sat and listened sadly to the sounds that reached his ears. Horns brayed, drums were beaten, and the shouts of multitudes echoed from the palace towers. These sounds of joy could not but drive the iron into his soul. They proclaimed the failure of all his striving; the Maurya was victorious and the son of the mountain-king was captive.

To Rakshasa in the grove came another emissary of Chanakya. This man, with much feigned lamentation, declared that, unable to endure life when his beloved friend, Jishnu Das, was gone, he intended suicide, and, pressed by Rakshasa, told this tale. Jishnu Das, a wealthy banker, was devoted in friendship also to Chandana Das, who, for the reason that he had refused to surrender to the Emperor's power the family of

Rakshasa from his secret protection, had been condemned to death and was at that moment on his way to execution. Though Jishnu Das had offered all his accumulated wealth to the Prince to save the life of his friend, yet the Prince would not accept the exchange ; wealth he did not need, but surrender. Jishnu Das in his despairing grief, having bestowed his goods upon the poor, was about to yield his life on the funeral pyre.

When Rakshasa heard this sad story his spirit was fired by a fresh determination and he bade the man go to Jishnu Das and tell him to forbear from so desperate an act, for he would himself save Chandana Das. He leapt up, ready with drawn sword to fight against the greatest odds, if thereby he might rescue the faithful guardian of his wife and children. But the man would have stayed him, saying, that since the rescue of Sakata Das from execution, the officers of justice were very vigilant ; moreover they had been ordered, if they saw an armed man near the place of execution, to slay their prisoner out of hand. Rakshasa's attempt, therefore, could not fail to precipitate the death of his friend. But Rakshasa, not to be turned from his resolution, pushed on.

Arriving at the spot, he found Chandana Das, garbed as a condemned criminal and bearing on his shoulders the stake on which he was to be impaled. Behind him stood his wife and child, guarded close by the stern soldiers who were attendant upon the executioner. The latter, disguised as he was in the equipment of executioner, Rakshasa did not know ; yet he was none other in fact than Siddharthaka. 'Behold tnis Chandana

Das,' he cried, 'brought here to die for his obstinate refusal to surrender to our Emperor the family of Rakshasa.' The wife of Chandana Das broke out in lamentation : 'Woe, woe ! a felon's death closes a life of honour. At the bidding of destiny friend and foe alike are persecuted ; the innocent are confounded with the guilty ; so does the savage hunter spare neither the beautiful and inoffensive deer nor the fierce tiger.' Siddharthaka ordered Chandana Das to dismiss his family, for justice could not be delayed. Then Chandana Das said to his wife, 'Depart, my love, and take our boy with you.'

'Forgive me, husband. You are going to another world and not to foreign realms, whence, after a time, you can return home ; and I the partner of your life cannot stay behind to trace your solitary way.'

'What mean you?'

'To follow you even unto death.'

'Think not of this ! The child's tender years need your loving care.'

'Husband, the household gods will not desert him. He has no need of me. Come, little son, bid your father a long farewell.'

The boy, then, fell at his father's feet and asked him what he must do after he was gone. 'Go, my boy,' was the reply, 'and live where Chanakya is not ;' and, taking the boy in his arms, he kissed him farewell.

Rakshasa, who had watched with tears this touching scene, now came forward offering himself for arrest and calling upon the executioner to let Chandana Das go free. This was the moment

for Chanakya, wrapped close in a mantle that concealed his identity, to enter and claim the victory. He felt that at last he had done the impossible. He had carried, safe in his robe, a bundle of fire; he had put the air in bondage, caged the raging lion, forded the sea unharmed by its monsters—all of which were more easy than capturing Rakshasa. Advancing and discovering himself to Rakshasa he said, 'Hail, Minister, most welcome is your coming; Chanakya pays you homage.' But Rakshasa replied, 'Minister! that title is now my shame. Salutation to you, Chanakya: but approach me not; I have been defiled by the touch of executioners.'

'No, you have not been thus defiled. This is one whom you have seen before, Siddharthaka; the other, a servant of the king, is of equal rank. Siddharthaka was the bearer of the letter, written at my request by Sakata Das, but ignorant of its import or destination.'

'Welcome indeed is the news that my friend was not unfaithful to me.'

Chanakya, thereon, in friendly tones revealed to Rakshasa all the devices by which he had endeavoured to convert him from a deadly enemy into a friend of Chandragupta. Scarcely had he finished when the Emperor entered the place attended by his guards. As a warrior he felt cheated of a conflict worthy of his mettle by the sudden disappearance of so mighty a host of enemies. Still he was now paramount. Addressing Chanakya he said, 'Tutor and Guide, to you I offer my thanks and reverence.' 'Nay, Sir,' answered Chanakya, 'salute rather Rakshasa, the

honourable minister and hereditary counsellor of the Imperial Throne.' Rakshasa, hearing these words, felt that he was caught. Chanakya by his prompt wit had bound him in toils that in honour he could not rend. Before him, waiting for his word, stood Chandragupta, young and graceful, raised deservedly to the mighty empire of Magadha, towering as the monarch of the forest over subjugated herds. He could not but admire, and words came of their own accord, 'O King, may you ever triumph!' And Chandragupta made answer, 'Triumph is certain, now that to the guidance of Chanakya will be added your vigilance.' With generous warmth Chanakya spoke, 'If, Rakshasa, you would save the life of your friend Chandana Das, yield the sword that you have unsheathed, and in exchange take this dagger, the emblem of a minister's office.' 'Nay,' replied Rakshasa, 'I am unfit to be minister as yoke-fellow to Chanakya.' But Chanakya would have no such denial. 'Unfit!' he cried; 'but for your stoutness as a foe, should we have been forced to keep these elephants caparisoned and ready day and night, till their backs were fretted with the burden and they pined for rest? Would these horses, with riders ever in the saddle, chafed constantly by curb and whip, be thus jaded by ceaseless labour? To whom is this due, if not to Rakshasa, whose valour humbles the most haughty?' These words moved Rakshasa much, but more his desire of saving Chandana, his friend, to the final surrender of his ancient loyalty. He said, 'I yield, Chanakya; your deeds and words have wrung friendship from me, and strangely

altered my natural feelings. I submit, and, as token of submission, accept the minister's dagger.'

At this moment an officer advanced with the news that Bhagurayana and other chiefs had brought Malayaketu a prisoner to the city's confines, and were awaiting Chanakya's orders. 'There stands the noble Rakshasa,' said Chanakya; 'he is now Chief Minister of State; go to him and take his commands.' Whereon Rakshasa, turning to Chandragupta, begged him as a first boon, that, because he in exile found a home in Malayaketu's dwelling, the life of the hill-prince might be granted him. Chanakya, the Emperor's mouth-piece, said to the officer, 'Go, and say that the Emperor, moved to clemency by Rakshasa's prayers, has pardoned Malayaketu and restored to him his liberty and his patrimonial lands, and orders that he shall be honourably conducted back to his native country.'

All ended in happy reconciliation, for Chanakya, with the king's permission, said that, since Rakshasa had been restored to royal favour, his friend Chandana Das should be the head of the merchant guild of the capital city. He would proclaim a general amnesty for all captives in the late conflict. Even the elephants and horses should be freed from toil. One thing alone should be condemned to lasting bondage, to wit that lock of hair, which, when he vowed to exterminate the Nandas and make Chandragupta Emperor in their stead, he had untied.

THE LATER STORY OF RAMA

[Uttara Rama Charita]

BHAVABHUTI

Bhavabhuti, the author of this drama, was a Brahman of Southern India, who migrated to Kanyakubja (Kanauj) in the eighth century A.D., when it was still the leading city of India. There, he became an ornament of the Court of Yasovarma, who was also the patron of Vakpati Raja, the Prakrita author. Three plays of Bhavabhuti's are extant. **Malati Madhava, Mahavira Charita** *and* **Uttara Rama Charita**. *Scenes of tender love, alternating with descriptions of the grander aspects of nature, are the characteristics of Bhavabhuti, who in India, is next in popularity only to the immortal Kalidasa.* **Malati Madhava,** *like* **Romeo and Juliet,** *is a love-story, but with a happy ending. It is a drama with the unique distinction of having a plot, not derived from mythological or historical legends, but entirely invented by the author.*

LIST OF PERSONS

RĀMA. King of Ayōdhya.
JANAKA. Father-in-law of Rāma, King of Mithilā.
LAKSHMANA. Younger brother of Rāma.
KUSA, LAVA. Twin sons of Rāma.
CHANDRAKĒTU. Son of Lakshmaṇa, in charge of the consecrated horse.
VASISHTHA. High Priest of Rāma's household.
VĀLMIKI. Author of the Rāmāyana ; also called Prāchetas.
ASHTAVAKRA. Messenger of Rishya Śriṅga.
DURMUKHA. Servant of Rāma.

ŚAMBŪKA. A Sūdra, killed by Rāma.
KAUSALYA. Mother of Rāma.
ARUNDHATĪ. Wife of Vasishṭha.
SĪTĀ. Wife of Rāma.
VĀSANTĪ. Friend of Sītā.

Having returned victorious from his fight with Ravana, Rama was crowned King of Ayodhya. The coronation festivities were over. The matrons of the royal household, Rama's mother and step-mothers and the wives of the Rishis, led by Vasishtha, had gone to witness the great sacrifice that Rishyasringa, husband of Santa, Dasaratha's daughter, had undertaken to perform and that would last for twelve years. Janaki thus left alone, when shortly she expected a child to be born to her, fell into a deep melancholy, that Rama strove to dispel by tender words and caresses.

The Rishis, who were celebrating the holy rite, sent Ashtavakra to Rama with a message of blessings and charged him to remember that it was his royal duty so to rule the land as to keep his subjects' love. The King sent word in reply that he would sacrifice personal affection, his own happiness, nay, Janaki herself, if thereby he could make his people happy. The messenger departed, leaving the King and Queen alone, and they, to while away the time and to ward off a return of the melancholy, together looked at the pictures of their wandering in the Dandaka forest and recalled to each other memories of those days. After a while, Janaki grew weary and, nestled in his supporting arms, sank to sleep.

While thus she slept, one of the royal servants, Durmukha by name, entered the royal presence

and whispered in the king's ears, 'Your Majesty, the people are wroth with you for having taken back your wife, since she has lived in another man's house.' Rama gently withdrew his arm from under Janaki's head and laid it on her pillow. He had sworn to surrender even Sita, if thereby he might keep his people's love ; it was cruel that so soon he must thus redeem his oath. Nevertheless, crushing his sorrow, he sent word to Lakshmana that he should take Sita in a chariot forthwith to the forest and there abandon her. He dare not witness her departure and therefore withdrew from public sight to suffer the deepest misery for the trick that fate had played upon him.

As the king ordered so Lakshmana did. He bore Sita to the forest, in which Valmiki was living a life of asceticism, and left her there. She, almost beside herself at this merciless abandonment, threw herself into the river Ganga and immediately gave birth to twin children. Pitying her, the Goddess of the Earth and the Goddess of the River brought her and her children safely to the bank, hard by which she lived till her children were old enough to be separated from their mother. When that time came, Ganga took them to Valmiki and left them in his charge to live as his disciples. The children, Kusa and Lava, soon won their way into the hearts of all the inmates of the hermitage. They proved quick learners and apt pupils of all the lore, fitting for young princes, that Valmiki could teach them. In these happy circumstances they grew from infancy to childhood.

Now it happened one day that the Rishi, who

had gone to the river to perform his morning ablutions, saw a hunter shoot one of a pair of birds that played happily together on a bough. The sight so moved the sage that from his lips there issued, in a metre till then untried, this couplet :

> Fowler, upon thy name henceforward infamy lasting !
> This bird, robbed of a mate, sadly remaineth alone.

Returning home, there came upon Valmiki the inspiration to tell in this metre the tale of Rama and Sita. When in time he had completed it he taught it to his little pupils, Kusa and Lava, who learnt to recite it in all ignorance that they were the sons of its hero-king and its heroine, the gentle Sita.

The twelve-year rite in Rishyasringa's hermitage was over. But the elders of Rama's household were unwilling to return to Ayodhya, so long as its queen was absent. Their leader, Vasishtha, urged that, since their task was over, and yet they would not go back to their home, they should journey to the forest house of Valmiki and there for some time abide. And this they did.

Janaka, father of Sita, had also taken to the life of an anchorite as soon as he heard of his daughter's banishment. Though he had dwelt for twelve years in a forest of Chandradvipa, time had not yet assuaged his grief, and the iron was still deep in his soul. There he might have been heard chanting this lament :—'Beloved Sita ! born of the sacrificial ground ! How I recall thee as a little one ; childish grief and laughter, like cloud and sunlight, chased each other on thy lotus face ; thy tiny teeth like buds of flowers, showed their

white tips; thy baby-talk was music to my ear. O Earth! Hard-hearted Goddess! How couldst thou continue to live after thy daughter had gone?' He, too, betook himself to Valmiki's hermitage, hoping to get consolation from his friend.

Meanwhile Rama had resolved to perform a horse-sacrifice in honour of his overlordship of Bharatavarsha. In place of his beloved Sita, when he was making the offerings to the fire-god, he placed a golden image of her by his side. Vamadeva, the High Priest, consecrated the horse and it was set free to wander in the charge of Chandraketu, son of Lakshmana.

Rama then traversed the Dandaka forest from border to border. On the confines of the forest at one spot, all was deep peace; at another, there resounded the cries of savage beasts; elsewhere the fiery breath of dragons, sleeping at their ease, set the wood fiercely ablaze; and in the caves running streamlets made gentle music as they fell in little cascades. From the edge they passed into the heart of the forest, whose radiance with blossom and young leaf was as the radiance of the many-hued peacock. Under the deep shade of the trees gambolled herds of deer. From the mountains glided clear streams of the purest water, made fragrant by the sweet flowers of overhanging creepers. Through the caverns of the hillside echoed the roaring of young bears at play.

As he wandered, Rama recalled many and varied scenes of his early life with Sita in this same Dandaka forest. Here on the Prasravana hill, that towered black as dark piled clouds, and at whose foot flowed the Godavari, stood the house

of the king of vultures. There was Panchavati, where he and his young wife had spent so many dear days. How had the look of the forest changed? The course of the river had shifted, so that where the limpid stream once flowed free, now stretched a dreary waste of sand. The forest had thinned where it was once thick; where there had been a clearing, an impenetrable wood had grown. But the everlasting hills were there, unchanged, standing as they stood in the old days. While he wandered in half-sad meditation, from Agastya and Lopamudra there came a message inviting him to their sylvan home, towards which he bent his steps.

It was the birthday of Kusa and Lava, on which the auspicious knot, marking the completion of their twelfth year, was to be tied. Sita, to celebrate the day, made ready to worship the Sun-God and went into the forest to pick flowers for the simple ceremony. She looked the incarnation of sorrow; her face was pale, and her cheeks, over which played her dishevelled locks, were emaciated. But none could see the change, for by the blessing of Mother Ganga she had been rendered invisible to gods and men. She was arrested in the path by the voice of one who ordered his charioteer to halt. It was Rama's voice, full and deep as the roar of a cloud that promises a shower. Though unseen herself, she saw her lord to be weak and wan as the moon in the morning sky. Overcome by this vision of him near Panchavati, where years ago he and she had shared such happiness, faintness enveloped her, even as a flame is hidden by a column of smoke. When she

recovered, she saw her lord also stretched upon the ground in a swoon. She embraced him with tears of joy, and the touch of her hand revived him. He cried, 'Is this reality? I seem to feel the cool tender touch of Sita's hand, caressing me. Dear Janaki! Loving Sita! Where art thou? I see thee not and yet I feel thy presence! Is this reviving joy, a dream or an illusion?'

Then Vasanti, who was a friend of Sita and her companion during her exile, by chance noticed that the young elephant which, in days gone by, had been nurtured as a baby by Sita, was being attacked by a rogue. She rushed forth seeking aid for the elephant, and chanced to see Rama seated in the forest; and she cried, 'Lord, hasten to the Sitatirtha, hard by the Jatayu peak, and save the elephant that Sita fostered long ago.' Rama rushed to its help, Sita following unseen. He had no need to help, for Sita's elephant was victorious over its foe. The sudden apparition of an old playmate brought tears to his eyes. Sitting beneath the shadow of a tree, he cried, 'Alas! Where is she whose eyes were timid as those of an affrighted hind and whose body was soft as the tender lotus stalk? Sorrow rends my heart, yet does not break it in twain. Within me burn the fires of memory, yet is my body not consumed to ashes! Cruel subjects of mine! What made you urge me to expel her from my home?' Vasanti tried to console him. She said, 'My lord, what is past is past. What use is there in lamentation? Be of good cheer!' But Rama answered, 'Vasanti, for twelve years has sorrow pierced my heart like a dagger. As a serpent it has stung



RAMA IN A SWOON

me; and as a red-hot iron it has seared me. The sight of these dear objects heightens the agony. Janaki, I seek thee in vain. Alas, alas, my heart is breaking; sorrow is sapping my body's strength; the whole world seems a desert; the gloom of despair is settling on my soul.' And once more he fell in a swoon. Sita hastened to him and touched his breast and forehead with her cooling hand; and, as if nectar had been poured into him, he revived and cried, 'Janaki has come again.' But Vasanti exclaimed, 'Alas, madness has seized the king!' 'Was it after all a dream?' he said, 'Fancy perhaps captures my mind and seems to make real what is my perpetual thought.' And he rose and departed in his chariot.

Meanwhile Vasishtha, his wife Arundhati, and Kausalya, mother of Rama, who had left Rishyasringa's hermitage on the completion of the twelve-year sacrifice, and Janaka from his forest-retreat, had all reached Valmiki's hermitage. The two boys, given a holiday in honour of the visit of these great personages, were busy at their play. One of them, lovely as the soft, blue lotus leaf, might have been Rama come back to childhood. Kausalya clasped him to her bosom and it seemed to her that she held Rama in her arms. And to Janaka the form and lustre both of Rama and Sita were plain to see in the little one. 'Child,' Kausalya asked him, 'have you a mother? Do you remember your father?' The boy, who was none other than Lava, replied, 'Neither have I seen.'

'To whom, then, do you belong?'

'To the sage Valmiki: to whom else?'

'Nay, dear child! Tell us all about yourself.'

'I know no more.'

At that instance there arose a shout, 'Soldiers, thus commands Prince Chandraketu: none may trespass upon the hermitage.' Lava said to Janaka, 'Sir, who is this Chandraketu?'

'Have you heard of Rama and Lakshmana, the sons of Dasaratha?'

'Why, yes! Are they not the heroes of the Ramayana?'

'If you know that, do you not know that Chandraketu is Lakshmana's son?'

'Why then, he is the son of Urmila and the grandson of the saintly king Janaka of Mithila, whose daughter is his mother.'

Asked how he knew all this, the boy replied that Valmiki had written a poem on the earlier life of Rama and had sent it to Bharata's hermitage by some of his disciples, his brother escorting them with bow in hand.

'Have you then a brother, child?' Kausalya asked.

'Yes, noble Kusa is his name.'

'Is he your elder, that you thus speak of him?'

'Yes, but very little my elder, for we are twins.'

As they talked, some pupils of Valmiki, the sage, burst in shouting, 'A horse! a horse! So they call the new animal that has arrived. Come, Lava, and see it wave its long tail, and arch its neck and paw the earth with its hard hoofs'; and dragging Lava with them, they ran away. They came upon a band of soldiers, who were loudly proclaiming, 'This horse is the standard and

declares the valour of the only hero of all the seven worlds, the enemy of the family of the ten-headed Ravana.' Lava turned to his companions and cried, 'Boys! drive this horse hence with clods of earth. Let it wander in the forest among the deer.' But the soldiers would not let them and surrounded Lava, flourishing their bright weapons.

The other boys had fled, and he stood alone in the ring of threatening armed men. He had no fear, but faced them, and his anger glowed on his countenance, and the sound of his arrows upon their armour was as the sound of hail striking the earth. Drawn by the noise, Chandraketu drove up in his chariot. It shamed him to see this unassisted child keep at bay his strong soldiers, even though weapons that had gleamed amid the dust of battle were in their hands. When Lava cast at them a magic javelin that fixed them in stupor, Chandraketu alighted from his car and challenged the boy to single combat.

The challenge was answered eagerly; and then ensued such a combat that the very inhabitants of heaven stayed their celestial chariots to look down and behold it. First Chandraketu sent forth a blaze, that filled the sky with fiery streaks and burnt everything round. To counter it Lava discharged a watery weapon. A ceaseless shower of rain poured forth, and the fires were quenched, and the sky was overcast with clouds. To meet this weapon, Chandraketu sent one of wind, whereby the rain-clouds were dispersed to the four quarters. Lava did not reply, for at that moment Rama appeared on the scene and waved his scarf

to bid them stay the fight. Lava and Chandraketu forthwith ceased, and came and saluted the hero. Rama embraced his nephew Chandraketu, who introduced Lava to him as a noble warrior, better than himself ; and when Rama beheld Lava, his heart seemed to melt with inborn love. And Lava learning from Chandraketu who the stranger was, prostrated himself before Rama and said, 'Father ! Lava, the disciple of Prachetas, bows to thee.' Rama raised him and embraced him with unbounded joy, and Lava begged of Rama pardon for attacking his soldiers. Rama chid him not, but asked him to withdraw his magic weapons, so that his soldiers might recover from their swoon, which Lava straightway did.

Rama said to Lava, 'Child ! the magic weapons that you have used must be learned from sages. I got knowledge of them from Visvamitra. Now, tell me, from whom did you acquire them?'

'From no one,' the boy answered, 'the knowledge of them came of itself to us.'

'Us? Us? why do you say "us"?'

'Why, because we are two brothers and twins.'

'Who and where is your brother?'

Kusa himself gave the answer, for he had come hastily, exulting that there was a chance of combat. But Lava met him and told him that he must not talk of war, since Rama was there and seemed to have affection for them both. And Kusa raised his eyes and saw Rama standing there and was moved by his friendliness of look and the majesty of his countenance ; and he approached the hero and said, 'Father ! Kusa, disciple of Prachetas, bows to you.' 'Come to me, child,' cried Rama,

'I yearn to embrace thee.' And he embraced the boy, and said to himself, 'can this child be my son? For he seems the very embodiment of my life. His embrace has bathed me in a stream of nectar. The bearing and address of Kusa and Lava, the manner of all their movements, bespeak royal descent. They look like Princes of Raghu's line. Their hue is fresh and bright, their shoulders are beautiful and strong, their eyes are steady and fearless as those of a lion and their tones full and deep as of the war-drum. In their features how like are they to Janaki! Their teeth, their lips, their ears and their eyes recall those of the daughter of Janaka. But what right have I to ask them who they are?' Tears flowed unchecked from his eyes. And Lava asked, 'Father, what troubles you? Why is your lotus-face besprinkled with tears?' 'Ah, child,' said Kusa, 'without Lady Sita, the world has for him become a desert. What! Have you not read the Ramayana?' And Rama checked his tears and asked the boys to chant some verses from the Ramayana, for he was curious to know the fashion of Valmiki's poem. Kusa, then, recited two verses to the following effect:—'Dear unto the great-souled Rama is Sita, and her love grows of its own accord; and dear is Sita unto Rama, more than his own life. The loving heart alone can understand their mutual love.' As he listened to the lines, Rama's heart was filled with memories of Sita, and he sat motionless, wrapt in thought.

Then Vasishtha and Valmiki, Kausalya and Arundhati and Janaka, who had heard of the duel between the boys, and feared for the result,

came up, walking slowly as befitted elders. Janaka and Kausalya, seeing how lean and care-worn was Rama, were overwhelmed with grief. Rama prostrated himself before them, and they all retired to Valmiki's cottage.

Valmiki had arranged a play to be acted on the glorious occasion of the visit of so large and notable a company to his hermitage. Men from the cities and the country, Brahmans and Kshatriyas, even Gods and Asuras had gathered to witness the performance. And Rama had summoned his brother Lakshmana to the gathering. The audience was all seated and awaited the beginning of the play. Suddenly from within the curtains arose a cry in Sita's voice, 'Ah! me miserable! To what end is life? I shall cast myself into the deep Bhagirathi!' And Sita appeared on the stage, and on one side of her advanced the goddess Ganga and on the other the goddess Earth, each with a child on her lap. Then followed this dialogue.

Earth. Hard indeed was it to bear the harsh imprisonment of Sita in the house of the Rakshasas. But this her second abandonment is beyond endurance.

Ganga. Who can resist fate, when the time is ripe?

Earth. Rama forgot the youth of his young bride. Had he no respect for me or Janaka? Nor regard for the witness of sacred fire nor for exalted birth?

Sita (*weeping*). Let me sink into my mother's bosom.

Then there flashed across the sky a blaze of

light, and the magic weapons were seen, offering themselves to the twins.

The Goddesses. Live, Sita, live. Thy two children have become, even as Rama, masters of magic weapons! We shall entrust them to the fostering care of Valmiki, and retire to our forest home.

Then taking Sita and the children with them the Goddesses left the stage.

The scene was more than Rama could bear and he fell into a deep swoon. Lakshmana rushed to his side, calling, 'Revered Valmiki, aid him, for by your poem you have wrought this effect.' But there was no need for Valmiki's help. There was a stir in the waters of Ganga, from which Sita arose and hastened to Rama's side, and revived him by the touch of her cool hands. And Rama started up, crying aloud with joy, 'What is this, my lady! Have you returned? And are all the elders here? Then I know that you have all forgiven my fault!' Arundhati rose and addressed the assembled throng, 'Men of the cities and the countryside! What think you? Shall we take back the Lady Sita, bride of the Solar Race, born on the sacrificial ground, sung by Brahma and the other Gods, whose purity has been borne witness to by the Fire-God, and who has been tended in her exile till now by the Goddesses of Earth and the Ganga?' In reply, before a human answer could come, there fell a shower of flowers from the sky. Heaven had approved, and man had no need to speak. Forthwith Rama clasped his wife with joy to his bosom. While they stood so, Valmiki brought in Kusa and Lava, and said,

'Children, behold your father Raghupati, your uncle Lakshmana, your mother Sita, and your reverend grandfather Janaka.' All in turn embraced the children. And Valmiki asked Ramabhadra what more he might do to serve him. Rama replied, 'May this tale thou hast told purify the world from sins and increase its happiness for all time to come!'

THE TRIUMPH OF TRUE LOVE

[MALATI MADHAVA]

LIST OF PERSONS

BHŪRIVASU. Minister of the Raja of Padmavati.
NANDANA. Favourite of the Raja of Padmavati.
MĀDHAVA. Lover of Malati.
MAKARANDA. Lover of Madayantika.
KALAHAMSA. Servant of Madhava.
AGHŌRAGHAṆṬA. Worshipper of Chamunda.
KAPĀLAKUṆḌALA. Follower of Aghoraghanta.
KĀMANDAKI. Abbess of a Bauddha convent.
MĀLATĪ. Daughter of Bhurivasu.
MĀDAYANTIKĀ. Sister of Nandana.
LAVANGIKĀ. Friend of Malati.
AVALŌKITĀ, BUDDHARAKSHITĀ } Disciples of Kamandaki.
MANDĀRIKĀ. Servant of Kamandaki's abbey.
SAUDĀMINĪ. Lady Magician, former disciple of Kamandaki.

Bhurivasu was the minister of the sovereign of Padmavati, and Devarata was chief *mantri* of the Raja of Vidarbha, whose capital city was Kundinapura. Long years before the tale commences, when they were young men, they studied the Sastras together in a famous school of which Kamandaki, a Buddha woman-ascetic, was the head. There in her presence and before one of her senior lady-pupils, Saudamini, it was arranged that their children, Bhurivasu's daughter, Malati,

and Devarata's son, Madhava, when of due years, should be united in wedlock.

Time passed and young Madhava became, in his turn, a pupil in Kamandaki's school. Malati grew to be a girl of such extraordinary beauty that the Raja of Padmavati desired her to be given in marriage to his favourite, Nandana. Bhurivasu was too much of a courtier to say anything but yea to the king's demand, and, at the same time, too fond a father to coerce the inclinations of his daughter. So he, the highest minister in the land, sought the help of his ancient teacher, Kamandaki, the ascetic, dressed in tattered weeds, whose food was the scanty dole of charity and whose supreme aim was to avoid those impediments to the final bliss of release from births in the life to come—the troubles of this life. Though it was scarcely meet for an ascetic to forward the loves of a youthful pair, she agreed to fulfil the wishes of her old pupil, the minister.

Bhurivasu himself behaved as if Madhava were a stranger to him; knowing young lovers to be indiscreet, he did not trust them with his secret intentions. As a wise man he veiled his projects from the world, and desired to effect them by silent unobtrusive means, so that, if the marriage of his hopes came about, men would think it was wrought by mutual love, and suspicion would pass him by. Kamandaki did not delay to act; on various pleas she sent Madhava along the street where stood Bhurivasu's mansion; Malati, looking from her casement, beheld the goodly youth and gave him her heart in secret.

To soothe the pain of love, Malati drew a picture of Madhava, which Lavangika, her foster-sister, unobtrusively took to Mandarika, servant of Kamandaki's abbey. Now, since Kalahamsa, Madhava's man, was in love with Mandarika, Lavangika shrewdly guessed that the picture would certainly be conveyed to Madhava. On the other hand Avalokita, a woman-disciple of Kamandaki, urged Madhava to visit the temple of Madana, the God of Love, for whose festival it was the season. She expected that Malati and her train of damsels would also resort thither and that thus the lovers would, as if by chance, be thrown together.

On the day of the festival, Makaranda, Madhava's friend and the lover of Madayantika, Nandana's sister, went in search of Madhava to the grove of Madana. Fellow-feeling had made him remark that Madhava for some time past had lost his nimbleness of step; he often fixed his eyes on vacancy, wore his robes in unusual careless disarray and was given to frequent sighs; plainly he, too, was the victim of Kamadeva.

As Makaranda entered the grove, Madhava appeared, soliloquising thus :—'How my thoughts wander uncontrolled! Time was when I could command them to obey my will, but now they stray ceaselessly to the moon-like face of a lovely maid; and my heart, as I gaze upon her, is filled with ecstasy.'

Makaranda came up to him, and as the midday sun's rays were fierce, proposed to Madhava that they should seek some shade within the garden and repose under a spreading tree. There the

two friends sat and talked. Makaranda, seeing the love-lorn looks of Madhava, asked him if he had fallen a victim to the darts of the God of Love. The other told how once, when he was reclining under a tall tree in Kamadeva's grove and idly weaving a garland of flowers, he saw the loveliest maid, to whom at first sight he lost his heart. She left the grove mounted on her elephant, and, as she went, turned her head not once, nor twice, but many times and gazed at him. From that time forward, his body was in a fever and his mind in a perpetual whirl. Nor was this all, for before the maiden departed, one of her attendants approached him, and, taking up the garland he had woven, declared that she would with it encircle the fair neck of Malati, who alone deserved to wear it. Who Malati was, he did not know till Makaranda enlightened him, saying that she was Bhurivasu's daughter whose hand in marriage the king had solicited for his favourite, Nandana.

At that moment Kalahamsa advanced to them and gave Madhava the picture of him that Malati had drawn and explained how it reached his hand. Madhava was so moved by the receipt of this evidence that he was not in disfavour, that he immediately drew from memory a portrait of the lady, beneath which Makaranda wrote, 'Since my eyes beheld the face which owns all the fairest charms, my heart has been filled with wondrous delight.' As he finished Mandarika entered hastily and, having saluted the young men, asked Kalahamsa for the drawing she had given him. But he gave her instead Madhava's drawing. Makaranda asked her where Malati first saw

Madhava and learnt from her that Lavangika, when she and her mistress were seated behind the lattice, bade her look at him as he passed her window.

It was now noon; the fierce rays of the sun made vain the careful labour of the morning toilet. The two friends retreated from the grove and made their way homeward; and Madhava the while did not cease to talk of Malati's loveliness.

Lavangika returned to her mistress and gave her Madhava's wreath. She, examining it, remarked that it was unevenly strung. If that was so, said Lavangika, the fault was the lady's, who had roused such a turmoil in the young man's heart; did she not remember with what love the youth gazed upon her in Madana's grove? Malati, wondering whether he would be true to her, asked Lavangika to relate how she obtained the garland. The maid told only part of the truth, saying that she went to Mandarika to recover the picture of Madhava that her mistress had drawn; on the way she saw Kalahamsa, Madhava's servant, who gave her another picture, that drawn by Madhava, which now she produced. Looking at it, Malati felt her heart still ill at ease; but when she read the lines at the foot of the picture, a wild agitation seized her, and she shed tears of anguish. She wished happiness to Madhava; as for herself, she dared not hope for felicity. That very day the king had told her father his will that she should marry Nandana almost at once; and the minister had replied, 'Your Majesty is master of your own.'

While she sat thus, rebellion in her heart,

Kamandaki and Avalokita came to visit her. The abbess looked with affection and delight on her slender frame; delicate and pale she seemed as the waning moon, and was sweet and comely, though worn and pallid by her distress. Love was making havoc with her youth; and as she bowed reverentially to Kamandaki, a sigh escaped from her bosom. The abbess was moved thereupon to express her grief that a girl so endowed with charms should be sacrificed to age and ugliness. Lavangika observed that the whole city condemned the minister's assent to the king's will, and urged Kamandaki to save the girl from such a living death. Malati, unable to hide her love, asked Kamandaki who this Madhava was, and the abbess told her of his nobility and of his father's exalted station. From this they fell to talking of the youth, his bravery, his charm, and his virtuous character, and, as they talked, the conch that sounds the fall of evening was heard; her visitors rose, embraced her and departed, leaving her to somewhat bitter thoughts about a father who could so neglect his daughter's happiness. From that time onwards, Kamandaki, glad that she had tutored Malati to her wishes, sowed the seeds of disobedience in her heart, and watered them with tales of girls who had chosen husbands for themselves and by frequent talk of Madhava's illustrious birth and exceeding virtue.

It was the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight, the day sacred to Sankara. Kamandaki took Malati and Lavangika to the temple of that God to gather flowers for oblation. She had through Avalokita bidden Madhava repair to the grove

of red *asoka* trees within the temple grounds and there await her. Buddharakshita, another disciple, had been despatched to Makaranda, summoning him to join them, for Madayantika also would be of the party of worshippers. Since Kamandaki first conversed with Malati the girl had become deeply attached to the abbess; she pined when Kamandaki was absent; rejoiced in her presence; whispered to the old lady the innermost thoughts of her heart; clung to her neck and begged her again and again to repeat the tales of maids who loved and won.

They were seated in the grove of the temple of Sankara; the soft breeze swept on the *champaka* flower and wafted its perfume on them; from within the blossoms came the soothing murmur of the honey-bees; and the *kokila* warbled its delicate song from the blossoming mango boughs. While they sat and talked, Madhava entered the grove, and seeing them, though himself unseen, his heart filled with joy; yet he did not approach them, but remained hid among the trees, glad merely to be in the neighbourhood of her on whom his heart was set.

Suddenly there arose a tumult of cries. In a cage in the temple porch was kept a savage tiger, that had by some mischance escaped and was now raging through the surrounding groves. Already with his mighty paw, he had felled several men, and was even now rending the flesh and drinking the blood of a victim. His roar was as thunder, and men and beasts were fleeing in terror before him. To the little group rushed Buddharakshita crying, 'Alas, alas for my dear friend Madayan-

tika! Will none save her, the sister of Nandana, from the pursuing monster?' Malati and Lavangika shook with the utmost fright, and started up, seeking a way of escape from the garden. Madhava approached them and bade them follow him. As he conducted them from the garden they saw with horror Madayantika flying before the tiger. Suddenly the brave youth, Makaranda, threw himself, sword in hand, before the beast. There was a short, sharp battle in which the rescuer, though wounded, drove his sword to the hilt into the tiger's heart. With streaming blood, supported by the trembling Madayantika, he leaned on his blood-stained sword, and Madhava, followed by Lavangika, ran to his succour.

Seeing his friend's plight, Madhava all but swooned. Madayantika and Lavangika led them both, half insensible, to where Kamandaki and her companion stood. 'Give aid, most holy abbess,' cried Madayantika; 'save the youth, who to save mine risked his own life.' Kamandaki gave the pot of water, which as an ascetic she carried, to the girls, who sprinkled the faces of their lovers and fanned them with their raiment.

In time, they revived and the two girls gazed, each on her lover, with looks of tenderness and gratitude, while Kamandaki rejoiced that destiny had brought happiness to these young souls. Turning on Makaranda she asked him how he chanced to be at hand to save Madayantika's life. He had heard, he said, in the city news that would add to Madhava's trouble and was hastening to apprise him of it, when he came upon the maiden fleeing from the infuriated beast.

enraged

Kamandaki, feeling that now was the time to pledge the troth of Malati, turned to Madhava and said, 'The joy you felt at your friend's escape makes this a fit occasion to present some token of your love to Malati.' Madhava replied, 'Willingly I obey your behest, since to her ministrations I owe my recovery from the swoon into which I fell when I saw Makaranda's perilous wounds. Freely I herewith pledge her my heart.' Lavangika said, 'For my friend I answer; she accepts the gift with joy.' 'But,' said Malati, 'what was this news from the city that should render him unhappy?' As if in answer to the question, a messenger came, who said to Madayantika, 'Lady, your brother desires your presence. It has pleased His Majesty the king to announce to-day that Bhurivasu has consented to Malati's marriage with Nandana; he desires you, therefore, to come and share his happiness.' This message plunged Malati and Madhava into despair; but Madayantika turned to Malati and said, 'Malati, this is glad news; we were both in this city; as children, played together in its streets; and as maidens, we are the dearest friends. Hereafter you will be my sister and the pride of our illustrious house.' So saying she left the grove with Buddharakshita to arrange for the celebration of the wedding.

Madhava became a prey to most melancholy thoughts. He said, 'Now let the thread of my vainly-cherished hope snap like the lotus fibre! Deep sorrow, be thou henceforth my companion! Despair, do thou possess my inmost soul! For Fate, my enemy, after I have won a love as

strong as my own, mocks me with disappointment. When Malati heard her father's ordinance, her face paled as doth the moon before the morning sun, and proclaimed her sorrow to be as poignant as mine.' Kamandaki comforted him saying, 'Madhava, all know that when the king sued on behalf of his favourite, Bhurivasu replied, "Your Majesty is master of your own." Do you not see that a covert meaning lies concealed in the minister's answer? For Malati is not the king's daughter, nor does any law, social or religious, authorize a sovereign to interfere in the marriage of a subject's daughter. Moreover, have I not pledged my word to help you? Trust in me; I will not spare trouble and pain, nay, life, if need be, to secure your marriage with this maid.'

As she ended, there came a messenger bearing the Queen's commands that Malati should be conducted with all haste to the royal palace. Malati broke into lamentation over her father's cruelty, comparing him to one who offers human sacrifice, and over the perversity of fate that had destroyed her happiness. She was led away by Kamandaki and Lavangika; and when they had gone Madhava soliloquized upon Kamandaki's promise of help, which was, he said, but the expression of her love to two children whom she had known from their births and did not mean that her help would avail them in this crisis of their lives. There was nothing left but to seek the dread demons of the burning ground and to try the potency of black magic. So resolved, he and Makaranda left the grove.

At the hour of midnight the distraught lover

went to the burning ground, holding a drawn sword in one hand and in the other a lump of bleeding flesh. His heart was filled with thoughts of Malati. At least, he thought, he might by the aid of magic see her face once more. But in this attempt he was foiled; for no sooner did the malignant fiends that haunted the place of funerals wake to life and see his fierce looks than they fled incontinently.

Meanwhile one Kapalakundala, a devotee of Siva, by command of her master, Aghoraghanta, was searching for a fair maiden to be offered to the Goddess Chamunda, as the crowning oblation of the magical rites which they had performed to gain salvation. She seized Malati as she was sleeping on the terrace of her house, and led her to Chamunda's shrine near the burning ground, there to be immolated. Aghoraghanta and Kapalakundala dragged her, dressed in crimson garb and adorned with a garland, before the idol. The guru walked round the idol, crying, 'Hail, mighty Goddess, Chamunda! When thou sportest in the Court of Siva, the globe trembles; the elephant hide that robes thee swings to and fro; the skulls that adorn thy waist rattle. From thy eye starts a fiery beam that wraps the spheres. Do thou, All Powerful, save us! And Kapalakundala told the maid that her death was at hand. She, poor thing, wept and cried, 'Madhava, lord of my heart, long may I live in your memory. Cruel father, she whom you meant as an offering to the king's favour is about to die.' Madhava who was near by, bent on his own business, heard her voice, rushed into the temple, clasped Malati in

his arms, and said, 'My love, fear not, but be of good cheer; this impious wretch that sought to kill thee, I shall visit with retribution.'

Aghoraghanta asked his chela what sinful youth thus interrupted their solemn rite. She answered that he was the maiden's lover and pupil of Kamandaki. Aghoraghanta turned fiercely on Madhava and said, 'Rash boy, you tempt fate. When a stag defies a tiger to save his doe, both become its prey. So shall you perish and become an added offering to the mighty mother.' 'Vile wretch,' Madhava replied, 'would you raise your sword against this girl, who is so delicate that she shrinks even from the flowers her playful friends cast upon her? My arm like Yama's ponderous mace shall fall upon you.' Malati urged him not to kill Aghoraghanta, since his plot to sacrifice her had been foiled. Kapalakundala, however, exhorted her master to be implacable and to destroy the culprit. As it chanced, just then there reached the spot, a rescue party sent by Kamandaki, to whom Madhava delivered Malati. He returned to Aghoraghanta, whom he fought and slew. His follower Kapalakundala vowed vengeance, as certain as that of the mother snake that, harbouring her wrath against the destroyer of her brood, waits till chance delivers him to her.

In the royal palace the preparations for Nandana's marriage were proceeding apace. The Brahmans constantly chanted their sacred hymns. Throughout the city the houses were brightly decorated; people made fitting preparations to ward off ill-luck, when the marriage train passed

through the streets. Following Kamandaki's injunctions, the matrons of Bhurivasu's household sent the maiden to the temple of Kamadeva to pray to the God that the ceremony might go through without let or hindrance. A guard of soldiers, richly accoutred, followed the procession.

Madhava and Makaranda, by Kamandaki's advice, lay concealed within the temple. A noise as of rushing clouds first reached their ears, soon followed by the sound of drums that drowned all other sounds. Looking through a lattice, they saw the procession advance to the temple. White umbrellas floated in the air, as trembling lotus blooms upon a lake. Chowries in multitudes stirred the air and the pennons flapped in the breeze. Majestic was the progress of the elephants, whose golden bells tinkled as they strode. Bevies of brightly jewelled girls, mounted upon the elephants, sung their prothalamiums. Numerous attendants armed with staves of silver and gold, kept back the crowd. In the centre of the throng was Malati, who, gleaming with jewels, came riding upon a vermilion-painted elephant; yet was she pale and worn with sorrow.

She descended from the elephant's back and walked into the temple, attended by Kamandaki and Lavangika. There she was brought the bridal dress and ornaments presented to her by the King, that she might adorn herself with them in the auspicious precincts. Kamandaki received them, a *saree* of white silk, a red muslin mantle, a jewelled necklace, a cup of sandal paste, and a chaplet of flowers. She sent the attendant to tell the minister that everything would be done

according to his instructions, and directed Lavangika to take Malati to the inner shrine, while she remained outside to inspect the jewels sent by the King. When the two girls went in, Madhava and Makaranda concealed themselves behind a pillar.

Lavangika offered Malati the sandal and the chaplet, saying that her mother wanted her to use them while she prayed to the deity of the temple to bless the marriage-rite. Malati replied, 'My friend and soul's sister, I, who am about to die a maid, beg of you one mark of your love to me. Bear always my image in your heart, go to Madhava—,' and then broke down unable to utter more. She took heart again and continued, 'Tell him he must not, when he hears I am dead, attempt to end his days, but must cherish my memory in his heart.' Her words brought to Madhava, who overheard them, mingled joy and pain. Lavangika strove to check her, saying, 'Horror overpowers me to hear you speak thus! Utter no more such words of ill omen.' 'Lavangika,' she answered, 'hitherto I have borne all my trouble in the hope that the lord of my heart will wed me. But now that all hope is dead, I am resolved to end my life, rather than pledge my faith to one I do not love. Do not oppose my purpose.' She fell at Lavangika's feet, who beckoned to Madhava quietly to take her place. Madhava did so, and, in low tones, said to Malati, 'Forego, dear girl, your desperate purpose; my heart cannot bear your loss.' She, still thinking that it was Lavangika who spoke, said, 'I will not rise till you give your approval to my

resolve.' 'What' he answered, 'can I say to oppose such despair? Do as you will.'

She clung to him, and, imagining it was Lavangika who spoke, said, 'Fast-falling tears have made me blind. Tell Madhava, putting your hands upon his brow, even as I do upon yours, "It is long since these eyes have seen your moon-like face. My weary sufferings, which neither the cool-rayed moon nor soft Malaya breeze can assuage, have been an affliction to my friends. Hope sustained my heart so far, but now at last it has failed. Keep me always alive in your memory." And, Lavangika, when I am gone cherish this work of Madhava's dear hands next to your heart.' So saying she hung the wreath that he had made round the neck of the person on whom she was leaning and found it was not Lavangika but Madhava. She started back saying, 'Lavangika has betrayed me!' 'Nay,' he said, 'gentle maid, your woeful experience will teach you to feel what others have suffered. Through all these days of fevered pain, love of you alone sustained my life.', Lavangika broke in, 'As you deserved, my friend, you have been ensnared.' 'Lady,' said Makaranda, 'my friend has endured so sad a time that I marvel that he yet lives. May the golden thread that will girdle your hand during the bridal ceremony bring you happiness.' Lavangika, turning sharply to Makaranda, said, 'Why talk of the golden thread that will bind her plighted hand? Does she not dread the immediate celebration of unwelcome marriage?'

Kamandaki entered and said, 'Look up, Malati. There stands before you the youth whose eyes

first caught the flame of love from your eyes, whose sufferings have been as great as yours and whose frame is as worn with anxiety as yours. Be no more frail and timid, but follow where your heart leads you and so fulfil your destiny.' 'What wonder,' said Lavangika, 'that Malati is afraid of Madhava! Is he not the dread person that killed the fierce and impious wretch, Aghora-ghanta, who would have sacrificed her to Kali that night when there was no moon to illuminate the dark funeral ground?' Kamandaki in solemn tones appealed to him, 'Madhava, my son, this is Bhurivasu's purest gem, at whose feet glitter the crowns of many prostrate princes. Fate has united you to her love and I being its instrument. My son, ancient friendship had made the prosperity of your house dear to me. Therefore may I demand of you obedience to my counsels. Pledge me your word that when I no more shall behold her you will tenderly cherish this child.'

Madhava was too much affected to make reply; wherefore Makaranda spoke in his behalf and said, 'Why should you need assurance, lady? The union of Madhava, whose love and tenderness are plain, with Malati, the living festival of human eyes, is the best surety of their future happiness.' Kamandaki, with the dignity of age and respect, adjured them both, 'Madhava, my son, and Malati, my child, remember both of you that an honoured husband and a virtuous wife are to each other kindred and friends, wealth, love and life and all that the heart desires.' Thereupon she bade the lovers depart and await

her coming in her house. When they had gone she bade Makaranda dress himself in the bridal robes intended for Malati, and with him and Lavangika left for the minister's palace.

There Makaranda, disguised as Malati, was duly married to the King's favourite, and after the ceremony Kamandaki left for her dwelling. Nandana, entering the marriage chamber, first humbled himself at his imagined wife's feet; when she spurned him, he seized her, whereat he received a fierce buffet from the supposed maid. Almost weeping with pain and vexation, and speechless with fury, he vowed to leave this virago to herself, and departed.

Makaranda and Lavangika sat in the women's apartments to await the coming of Buddharakshita and Madayantika. When at last they heard the tinkling of anklets Makaranda lay down and pretended to sleep. As they approached, Madayantika asked Buddharakshita if it was true that her brother was displeased with Malati. Being told that he was, she suggested entering Malati's room and taking the girl to task. Having entered, she asked Lavangika, 'What, is your fair friend sleeping?' Lavangika answered, 'Yes, do not break her slumbers. Of late she has been sore troubled and now, having forgot awhile her cares, has fallen asleep.' After they had sat awhile, discussing the misbehaviour of the supposed Malati to her newly married husband, Lavangika skilfully turned the talk to Madayantika's escape from the jaws of the tiger. As they spoke of the fight and rescue, Madayantika avowed that she had fallen in love with Makaranda. At length

she went to Malati's couch, from which Makaranda leapt up, throwing off his disguise and seized Madayantika's hand and said, 'Fear nothing, gentle maid, I am your slave.'

Lavangika stepped up to Madayantika, whose face she lifted up and, looking into her eyes, said, 'Behold your lover! The servants are asleep; let us take off our anklets and depart with him whither Malati has gone.' And Buddharakshita turned to Makaranda and said, 'Noble youth, Madayantika gives herself to you,' to which Makaranda replied, 'This, indeed, is a glorious conquest; to-day I reap the harvest of my youth; on this festival the fish-bannered Kamadeva dowers me with this bride.' They fled by a private doorway; the night journey was not wanting in pleasures, for the breeze swept cool, redolent of the fragrance of the scenes it had passed, laden with the odours of camphor and sweet flowers and fragrant wine.

Madhava, Malati and Avalokita were sitting in the grove adjoining Kamandaki's mansion, when Madayantika, Buddharakshita and Lavangika, with Kalahamsa in attendance, entered in haste. Lavangika cried, 'Help, Madhava! the city-guard challenged us; Makaranda unaided is checking their pursuit; meanwhile we have escaped with Kalahamsa's help.' And Kalahamsa added, 'As we fled, we heard on every side the tumult increase; I fear a fresh force has joined the guard.' Madhava assured all that Makaranda's prowess might be relied on to prevail against great odds. As a lion breaks the elephant's broad temples with one stroke of his paws, so

Makaranda's right arm could contend with multitudes; but yet to share in the honours of the heroic enterprise he would go to help his friend.

Forthwith he and Kalahamsa rose and left the mansion, and Malati sent Avalokita and Buddharakshita to inform Kamandaki of these late events. Lavangika she sent after her husband to warn him to shun all needless danger; and, because the maid did not return soon, she left Madayantika in the house, and ventured alone along the dark road to meet Lavangika. As she was going, Kapalakundala seized her and made off with her, saying, 'Now, let your lover, the slayer of my master, save you, if he can; you tremble as a bird that has seen the hovering hawk! I have long marked you as my prey. I shall bear you to Sri Parvata, there to tear you piecemeal, and you shall be the victim of my just vengeance.'

Madayantika, with the desire of following Malati, called her name aloud; but, instead, Lavangika responded to her call, and, coming up, said, 'Scarcely had we left the boundary of the garden, when, hearing the increasing tumult, Madhava leapt suddenly aside and was lost in the crowd. I could not follow him in the multitude and retraced my steps. On all sides I heard people grieving for the fate of the young friends; for the King, hearing that they had carried away the minister's daughter, had, to capture them, sent his guards, and was waiting on the terrace of the royal mansion for their return.' Not seeing Malati, she asked where she was? 'She went,' said Madayantika, 'to watch the road for you and doubtless has entered the garden.'

Then up came Kalahamsa, who had a stirring tale to tell. The king's guards had surrounded the two friends; the gleam of polished swords flashing in the moonlight was ominous; but Makaranda, merciless and active, fell upon the soldiers irresistibly, so that they fled in dismay, with a clamour that filled the sky, even as the Kalindi roared when Balarama turned her from her course with his mighty plough. Madhava was no less valorous. He soon cleared the road of the soldiers; feeling the thunderstroke of his arm, they dropped their weapons in heaps and incontinently fled. The king watched them from his palace roof, with admiration for their valour. At last they were taken and led before him, and he, when he learnt their rank and family, turned to Bhurivasu and said that he should be proud of kinsmen so brave, so nobly-born, and withal handsome as the moon.

The two young men escaped from punishment; they were dismissed from the royal presence as free men and made their way straight back to Kamandaki's abode, conversing about their escape. Madhava praised Makaranda's prowess, which was, he said, more than mortal; how he broke his way through the ranks of the king's guards, scattering the timid and laying low the bold, was marvellous. He seemed to tear his way through the surging troops. Makaranda, laughing, replied that the soldiers would be the object of mockery. At any rate, they agreed, they must also admire the clemency of the king, who had so readily overlooked their faults.

Talking thus, the two friends reached Kamandaki's house, which, to their surprise, seemed

deserted. They, therefore, searched for the ladies in the garden, where they found Lavangika and Madayantika. In one breath they asked where Malati was. But the ladies knew no more than they. Madhava was much agitated; he said, 'My heart misgives me; my left eye throbs and other ill omens crowd upon me. I fear my love is lost to me for ever.' Madayantika told him all that she knew. Madhava cried out in agony, 'Malati, dearest! If in sport thou hidest, give up the cruel game; if in anger, behold now I humble myself at thy feet; if to test my love, the test has already been too long. My heart can bear no more. How couldst thou be so unkind?' Makaranda proposed that they should inquire of Kamandaki, in search of whom all departed; but she knew as little as the rest what had become of Malati. Then Madhava, accompanied by his faithful friend, went forth into the wild country to trace her out, through rough paths and rugged valleys.

About the time that Malati was snatched away by Kapalakundala it chanced that Saudamini, a disciple of Kamandaki, who in the years that were past had by hard penance on Sri Parvata acquired supernatural powers, paid a visit to the city. And having learnt there of Malati's disappearance and of Madhava's wanderings, she set forth in an aerial chariot.

Where the Sindhu and the Madhumati met stood the temple of Svarnabindu, whose idol was not made by human hands. When Saudamini, saw the shrine she burst into praise of Siva, 'Hail, all hail, Maker of the Universe, Bestower of all bounties, source of the Vedas, God who wearest

the crescent moon in thy diadem, Destroyer of Kamadeva, Eldest Lord and Teacher of mankind, all glory be to Thee!' She halted and gazed on the scene beneath her. The peaks of the mountains were darkened by overhanging clouds; in the groves the peacocks were screaming; the gloom of the woods was enlivened by the songs of mating birds; from the caves in the hills were heard the cries of the young bears; and cool and sharp was the fragrance of trees freshly snapped by the wandering elephants.

Through such scenes as these, Madhava and Makaranda wandered in the forest far and wide, fruitlessly searching for lost Malati. One day, Madhava, overwrought with the agony of the search, cried out, 'Alas! I die; what is life now that Malati is lost?' and fell down in a deep swoon. Makaranda, looking on his friend's lifeless form, mourned for his death bitterly, and determined to follow him to the other world. He would have thrown himself into the river hard by, had not Saudamini appeared and pulled him back. Madhava was not dead, she told him, nor was Malati lost. Together they revived Madhava, to whom, when he came to, she told Malati's story; how, in revenge for Aghoraghanta's death in the shrine of Chamunda, Kapalakundala had seized his bride with intent to kill her, and how she herself had saved the girl.

Meanwhile Kamandaki, Madayantika and Lavangika also strayed through the same forest in fruitless search of Malati. They, too, resolved to die, and were about to cast themselves, in despair, from a high cliff, when they heard Makaranda

calling, 'Rejoice, our griefs are at an end.'" They desisted from their intent, till he came to them. Kamandaki, seeing him alone, reproved him, and said, 'My son, are you without your friend? Say, how is this?' And Makaranda replied in tones of radiant joy, 'No more search and grief! A dame of mystic power has, by her magic, come to our help.'

As he spoke, a voice was heard from afar, saying, 'Woe! woe! Bhurivasu, spurning life and all hopes of worldly advancement, grief-stricken at the news of Malati's fate, is about to climb the funeral pyre before the shrine of Swarnabindu.' Thereat Kamandaki exclaimed, 'Most wonderful! What strange events come thronging to-day. It seems as if sweet-smelling sandal and sharp sabres fall together in a mingled shower! Sparks of fire and drops of nectar mingle in descent from the skies.'

Then was heard the voice of Malati crying, 'Dear father, refrain, refrain; let me behold your lotus face! Turn your eyes upon your child!' And shortly Madhava entered bearing Malati, senseless, in his arms; and he said, 'Saved from danger, yet overtaken by fear! Who can resist the arms of destiny?' Makaranda asked Madhava where the magician lady had gone, and Madhava answered that as they were returning all three in haste from Sri Parvata, a forester met them and told them the last sad news, whereupon she vanished. Now drops of healing balm fell from the sky; Malati heaved a deep sigh; her pulse beat once more; her gentle eyes opened and her face was lit with the light of reawakening intelligence, even as the closed lotus bloom opens to

the sun. Yet again a voice was heard from above, saying, 'Though he was deaf to the king's entreaties and the prayers of Nandana, the minister has by me been kept from the funeral pyre, and recalled to life and joy.' On hearing this news all rejoiced, and Malati rose and prostrated herself before Kamandaki, who raised and embraced her and said, 'Brought back to life, you in turn restore your friends to life.' Madhava said to Makaranda, 'My faithful friend, life is once more a joy.' And Malati embraced Madayantika and Lavangika in turn. Kamandaki asked the young men how these strange events came about; and Madhava told how their misfortunes were due to the furious wrath of Kapalakundala, from whom Saudamini had saved them.

Last of all Saudamini entered and said to Kamandaki, 'Hail, holy dame, your scholar pays you homage.' Kamandaki welcomed her saying, 'Well done! These lives preserved have sanctified you. Do not stand before me in such reverent posture; come, let me embrace you as a friend.' Malati told her companions, Madayantika and Lavangika, how Saudamini had baffled the fierce Kapalakundala's schemes. Madhava and Makaranda remarked that even the *chintamani* demands a suppliant's prayer before it grants his wishes; but this noble lady had helped them unsolicited. Saudamini, impatient of thanks, cut short the speeches, and turning to the abbess said that she bore to the youths a letter written by the King with the full agreement of Nandana and Bhurivasu. This letter she gave to the preceptress, who took and read it. It ran as follows :—'Unto

all be happiness. The King thus ordains: we are well pleased to greet you as a son, eminent among the worthiest, redeemed from misfortune; further we permit your friend to wed the maid who chose him to be the lord of her love.' Madhava bowed and said, 'My utmost wish is granted;' and Malati said, 'The lingering dart of fear has been plucked from our hearts;' and Lavangika rejoined, 'The love of Malati and Madhava has at last triumphed.'

Avalokita, Buddharakshita and Kalahamsa now joined the assembled friends, to whom Kamandaki remarked, 'This our story full of strange incidents is closed in happiness.' Saudamini added, 'And Devarata and his old friend will see with joy the long projected union of their children.' The young men and the maidens did not understand these words, but Kamandaki explained, 'When years ago your fathers were my chelas, they vowed to each other that when their children grew up their hands should be united; to me and to Saudamini they left the task of so accomplishing their vow that the king's wrath might be averted. This has now been fulfilled. If any more wish remains ungratified, declare it, Madhava.' Madhava replied, 'My happiness is perfect; only one desire I have besides. May men fast cling to virtue; may kings be merciful and firm and protect the earth; and may the people be blest in friends, kindred and children and live happily, free from harsh poverty.'

THE BINDING OF THE BRAID

[VENI SAMHARA]

BHATTA NARAYANA

Bhatta Narayana, the author of this play, is believed to have been the head of the party of Brahmans invited by Adisura, King of Bengal, who lived probably in the Eighth Century A.D. The Brahmans belonged to Kanyakubja and were, therefore, according to the Sastras, men of pure caste. Adisura settled them in Bengal, for the purpose of reviving the Brahminical rites, which had decayed in that province during the long prevalence of the Bauddha cult. The descendants of these immigrants are the Kulinas of Bengal. Bhatta Narayana was the last of the great Sanskrit dramatists.

LIST OF PERSONS

YUDHISHTHIRA. The eldest of the Pāṇḍavās.
BHĪMASĒNA. ⎫
ARJUNA. ⎬ His younger brothers.
NAKULA. ⎪
SAHADĒVA. ⎭
KṚISHṆA. Friend and ally of the Pāṇḍavās.
DHṚITARĀSHṬRA. Father of the Kauravās.
DURYŌDHANA. Eldest son of Dhṛitarāshṭra.
DUSSĀSANA. One of his younger brothers.
KARṆA. King of the Angas, friend of the above.
KṚIPA. A preceptor of the Kauravās.
AŚVATTHĀMĀ. Nephew of Kṛipa.
DRAUPADĪ. Wife of the Pāṇḍavās.
BHĀNUMATĪ. Wife of Duryōdhana.
GĀNDHĀRĪ. Wife of Dhṛitarāshṭra.
DUSŚALĀ. Sister of Duryōdhana.

The Pauravas ruled at Kurukshetra. Santanu, who was one of their great kings, had two grandsons, Dhritarashtra and Pandu. The former being blind, the latter ruled over the kingdom. Dhritarashtra had a hundred sons, generally called the Kauravas, of whom Duryodhana was the chief, while Pandu had five sons, Yudhishthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva. When Pandu died, disputes arose about the succession, and there was intense jealousy between the cousins. Duryodhana first attempted to have the Pandava brothers murdered; but failing in his design to obtain the kingdom by this means, he invited Yudhishthira to the arbitrament of the dice. On the first throw Yudhishthira staked all his wealth and lost it; the gambling-fever then so got hold of him that he made Draupadi the stake of the next throw. That, too, he lost. Worse still, was the insult of Dussasana, younger brother of Duryodhana, who seized Draupadi by her braid of hair and dragged her from the Pandava house. The braid thus untied by the evil-hearted Dussasana, Draupadi from that time on let loose to keep in memory the insult she had suffered.

This incident naturally increased the enmity between the cousins. Yet Yudhishthira, who was of a peaceful temper, advised his younger brothers to forgive and not to retaliate on Duryodhana and his haughty brothers. He also sought Krishna's aid to induce Duryodhana to give the Pandavas five towns to rule, Indraprastha, Vrikaprastha, Jayanta, Varanavata and another place, and so to effect a peace. But Bhimasena, the second of the Pandava brothers, a giant in stature and a hero

of great valour, felt that all this trafficking was a sign of cowardice and fumed and fretted while it was going on. He burned with the desire to grind the Kauravas to dust in battle, and above all with his club to beat Duryodhana to death. He told Sahadeva, his youngest brother, that even if they concluded peace, he would not keep the agreement, but would fight the Kauravas single-handed, and cared not if thereby he disobeyed the injunctions of his elder brother.

He would have forthwith gone to the armoury to equip himself for battle. But in his angry excitement, he walked absent-mindedly to Draupadi's apartments. There sitting on the floor, he lamented Yudhishthira's loss of heroism, till, accompanied by her maid, Draupadi came to him, her bosom heaving sighs and her eyes blinded with tears. He took her by the hand, seated her by his side, and, looking into her face, asked her why she was thus dejected. Her emotion would not let her answer, and she signed to her maid, who, with folded hands, told how the Princess had gone with Subhadra to bow before the feet of Gandhari, and how Bhanumati had asked her, 'Now that they have begged for five towns, why are your tresses yet untied?' On hearing this tale Bhimasena took this dread vow, 'These hands of mine shall bind your braid, when they are red with the blood of Duryodhana.'

Suddenly there arose the sound of many drums. The chamberlain hastened in with the news that Krishna, the ambassador of the Pandavas, had been treated with outrage by the Kauravas. They had attempted to seize and bind him, but, in his

anger, he blazed with a supernal effulgence that blinded them, and had returned to the Pandavas' camp unharmed. An ambassador's person was always sacred; the Kauravas had broken a holy observance. Is it strange that Bhimasena's fury was yet more inflamed by the tale of their disrespect?

Then there was heard a voice, crying aloud, 'Drupada, Vrishni, Andhaka, Sahadeva, and others, commanders of our battalions, and you, leaders of the Kaurava forces, listen all! The fire of Yudhishthira's anger has been kept under till now, because of his plighted word, his forgiving spirit and his desire for peace in the family. But since Draupadi has been insulted by Dussasana, it has burst into flame and blazes through the great forest of the Kaurava race.'

Soon the Great War began, and had raged for several days. Bhishma, the grand-uncle of the combatant heroes, the conqueror even of Parasurama, he who was general of the Kauravas, had been struck low by the Pandavas and lay, mortally wounded, on a bed of arrows, awaiting his death. On the other side, Abhimanyu, the young son of Arjuna, though, almost a child, he had vanquished single-handed a host of veteran archers, had been slain. Duryodhana left the field that, in the company of his wife, he might rejoice at the death of Abhimanyu, and congratulate Karna, Drona, Jayadratha and their fellows by whose joint efforts Abhimanyu was overthrown and killed.

Bhanumati, his queen, had gone to pay her morning obeisance to Gandhari, her husband's revered mother. As she returned to her tent

where Duryodhana awaited her, she narrated to her attendants a distressing dream of the previous night. In a dream she sat in her garden and saw a mongoose of resplendent form kill a hundred serpents. Now the Kauravas were a hundred in number, and Nakula, the mongoose, was also the name of one of the Pandavas; she, therefore, feared that the dream foreboded disaster to her husband's side. Her maid agreed with her that the vision was inauspicious, and suggested that the portended evil might be warded off by *puja* to the Gods and gifts to the Brahmans. Duryodhana overheard their conversation; his left eye throbbed, which he thought another bad omen, but he heartened himself with the memory of what the sage Angiras had sung, that the motions of the stars, dreams, omens, and gifts to the Gods yield only chance fruit.

By this time the chariot of the Lord of Day had risen above the Eastern Mountain; his orb shone like burnished gold and had quenched the red light of the dawn. Bhanumati ordered her maid to bring her the vessel containing the materials for the worship of the Sun. At this moment Duryodhana came softly forward and, taking the vessel from the maid's hands, gave the contents to his wife, who did not perceive his presence. She, bowing to the Sun, thus prayed: 'O Lord, who art the thousand-leaved lotus of the sky's vast lake! Saffron mark on the forehead of the damsel of the eastern sky! Jewelled lamp of the universe, unrivalled in beauty! Whatever of evil portent was in my dream of last night, turn it into a benediction on my husband and his brothers.' She

called to the maid for flowers. Duryodhana presented the flowers to her, and in doing so his hand chanced to touch hers; whereon he clumsily dropped the flowers on the ground. Bhanumati angrily scolded her maid, as she thought, for her negligence; but when she turned and saw that it was her lord, she modestly bent her head. He said, 'My queen, this attendant of yours is certainly unskilful in such duties; but the queen has the power to punish him.' Then, seeing that she stood silent, he added, 'Why are you without a word? Cast on me, your servant, the glance of favour; speak to me and I shall wait on you with folded hands.'

Bhanumati asked him to allow her to perform a vow. He replied that he had heard of her dream; but bade her not to trouble herself with prayer and sacrifice. Knowing that he maintained battalions that stretched to the four quarters of the sky and caused the earth to quake, why should she thus be lost in fear?

Suddenly there was heard a great uproar, which much affrighted Bhanumati, so that she clung to Duryodhana, her lord. And he calmed her, telling her that there was no cause for alarm; for it was but the noise of a fierce wind that blew from every quarter; and he led her tenderly to a sheltered place.

Of a sudden there rushed in the chamberlain, who cried, 'Broken, broken!' The king and queen turned, started and wondered, when he added, 'Broken is the standard-post of your chariot, shaken by this terrible wind; the wild clanging of its bells was as the cry of woe.' Now

this was a bad omen, to avert which the family priest was ordered to offer due oblations. Hardly was the order given when the doorkeeper announced the arrival of Duryodhana's sister, Dussala, who came with the mother of her husband, Jayadratha, king of the Sindhus. They presently appeared before Duryodhana and fell at his feet, tears streaming from their eyes. The elder lady announced that Arjuna, fired by rage at the death of his son, Abhimanyu, had vowed to slay Jayadratha before the sun set. Duryodhana replied scornfully that Arjuna, who, when he saw Draupadi dragged by the hair, displayed no anger, was not one whose resentment she need fear. Still she was not reassured. 'Why then,' said Duryodhana, to comfort her, 'Arjuna is sure of death. For Jayadratha, surrounded and helped by the Kaurava troops, is certain of victory.' And he bade his servants make ready his chariot that he might join the fray. Nevertheless in the battle Arjuna fought fiercely, and slew the lord of the Sindhus, and set before the goblins a rich fare.

After Bhishma had been struck down, Drona, the Brahman Acharya, the teacher of archery to the warring cousins, became the commander-in-chief of the Kaurava forces. He, who had learnt the use of all weapons from Parasurama, fought valorously on the field of battle, till in his hearing were uttered by Yudhishthira, who was reputed never to speak falsehood, the words, 'Now has been slain Asvatthama,' and the words, 'the elephant' were added in an inaudible tone. Drona, who lived only for the sake of his son, Asvatthama, was overwhelmed by what he thought was the

news of the death of his son, so that he threw down his arms, and sat on the battle-field, tears flowing ceaselessly from his eyes. And Dhrishtadyumna, Draupadi's brother, laid hands violently on Drona, the Acharya, seized him by his grey hairs, and cut off the head of the preceptor of the three worlds.

Meanwhile Asvatthama was preparing to join his father in the battlefield. Filled with the joy of battle and drawing his gold-hilted sword, the blade of which had a sheen like that of water-charged clouds, he made ready to descend on the field of battle. As he went, he heard the clamour of soldiers, horses and elephants running from the fight. He saw Karna, King of the Angas, his own uncle Kripa, and others retiring from the battle and wondered how under the leadership of his valiant father defeat could happen.

While he stood in amazement, there ran up to him Drona's charioteer covered with wounds and fell at his feet. In broken accents he narrated the misfortune that had happened, and Asvatthama swooned at the tale. Before him, as he came to, stood his uncle Kripa. Asvatthama vowed that he would join his father immediately in the world of his ancestors. But Kripa dissuaded him from rash suicide, reminding him of the need for him to live and perform the *sraddha* ceremonies due to his father. The young hero burst into a torrent of curses upon Dhrishtadyumna for so dastardly beheading an old veteran who had laid down his arms, upon Yudhishthira, the ever-just, whose single lie had caused the fatality, upon Krishna, Satyaki, Arjuna and Bhima for con-

niving at this atrocity. He vowed to extirpate the vile race of Kshattriyas, even as Parasurama did, and summoned his chariot that he might fulfil his vow. But Kripa urged his nephew to go to the battlefield only as his father's successor in the command of the Kaurava hosts, for after Bhishma and Drona, he was the most competent to lead them on to victory. And Asvatthama agreed, and with Kripa departed to Duryodhana's tent that he might propose himself as commander-in-chief.

Meanwhile Duryodhana and Karna debated the reason why Drona, on hearing of his son's death, cast away his weapons at a moment when he should rather have taken them up. 'After all,' said Duryodhana, 'a Brahman is but a Brahman; grief robbed him of his valour, and the meekness of the Brahman overcame his sense of a general's duty.' Karna, however, thought otherwise and suggested that Drona's aim was the coronation of Asvatthama as Emperor, after the princes of both sides had fallen in the war. Duryodhana agreed; 'Doubtless,' he added, 'for that reason he looked on idly when Jayadratha was done to death by Arjuna.'

At this moment, Kripa and Asvatthama entered; Duryodhana descended from his seat, bowed to Kripa and embraced Asvatthama and seated them by his side, Asvatthama weeping the while. Then said Karna, 'Son of Drona, stay your tears;' and Duryodhana said, 'Son of my Guru, your sorrow is not greater than mine; if he was your father he was no less dear to me, being my father's beloved friend. He was my teacher of archery as well as yours.'

Asvatthama replied, 'Helped by your sympathy, I should doubtless cast off my load of sorrow. Yet, so long as I live, how can I forget the contumely my father suffered or his outrageous death.' And he uttered this vow: 'Every warrior among the Pandavas who proudly bears arms, every scion of the stock of Dhrishtadyumna, be he child or man or infant unborn, every witness of the insult, so long as I have breath or strength to fight, will I strive to slay.' Duryodhana approved of this vow, whereupon Kripa suggested that so great an oath entitled Asvatthama to the command of the forces. To this, however, Duryodhana replied that he had already promised the supreme command to Karna. And Asvatthama declared that if he were made commander, he would kill all Duryodhana's enemies before nightfall. 'Fool,' Karna burst out, 'such idle prating as yours does not befit a hero.' Then ensued an angry altercation, which ended by Asvatthama's saying, 'On your head, swollen with pride, will I plant my left foot; hinder me if you can.' Karna retorted that he would cut off Asvatthama's foot, since being a Brahman, he might not be killed; and Asvatthama cut off his Brahminical thread, as a symbol that he renounced his caste, and challenged Karna to single combat. Both drew their swords, but were prevented by Duryodhana and Kripa from striking each other. Asvatthama, in his wrath, threw down his sword, and vowed that till Karna was killed in battle, he would not take it up again. And Karna scornfully retorted that to lay down arms was a hereditary accomplishment with Asvatthama.

This foolish quarrel was interrupted by a voice from the battlefield, crying, 'Ah miscreant, who didst foully drag Draupadi by the hair! Base son of Dhritarashtra, have I at last met thee! Karna, Duryodhana, and all of you, enemies of the Pandavas! I have gripped Dussasana as in a vice; save him who can.' Asvatthama heard the cry and said to Karna, 'Lord of Anga, commander of the Kauravas, protector of the world, by your prowess go and save Dussasana from Bhimasena.' And Karna rose hastily and went to the battlefield, saying, 'Can Bhimasena cross the shadow of Dussasana, while I am alive? Fear not.' Asvatthama called on Duryodhana also to help his brother; and Duryodhana mounted and rode to the battlefield. The uproar of the fight that ensued fell on Asvatthama's ears like the sound of a tempest; for Arjuna assailed Karna and Duryodhana with an endless shower of arrows, so that they might not rescue Dussasana from the hands of Bhimasena. To Drona's son the thought of idleness while Dussasana was being slain was unendurable; saying to himself, 'Better to be untrue to a vow than to see the Kaurava prince die,' he was about to seize his weapons again, but a voice from heaven was heard crying, 'O great son of Bharadvaja, ill is it for you to break your plighted word.' Though Kripa rejoiced that a celestial voice had saved Asvatthama from a sin, Asvatthama lamented this heavenly intervention which hindered him from battle. To his uncle Kripa he said, 'Fool that I was to give way to anger that has rendered my strength of no avail! Do you, at least, take your stand by

Duryodhana's side.' And, together, uncle and nephew went to the battlefield.

As they reached it Kaurava soldiers fled in all directions, throwing down their arms in terror at the sight of Bhimasena drenched with Dussasana's blood. Kripa and Karna stood side by side, and on them Arjuna from his chariot was pouring a ceaseless shower of arrows. Bhimasena cried, 'Oh, you Kaurava warriors, who in terror at the sight of me have cast down your swords and spears, your bows and arrows, be not afraid. I have as yet fulfilled but one part of my vow. I, the slave of Duryodhana, won on a throw of the dice, hold you all as witnesses! I have torn open the broad breast of Dussasana, the insulter of Draupadi, and at my deed Karna and Salya looked on, while Duryodhana stood with his bow drawn and made no move to help.'

Meanwhile, Duryodhana was so wounded by Arjuna's arrows that he swooned in pain; and his charioteer, fearing that Bhimasena would kill his master too, quickly drove the chariot far from the battlefield to the shade of a banyan tree, through which a cool breeze from a lake blew. When Duryodhana came to, he cried, not knowing what he saw, 'That vile Bhimasena cannot harm my brother, so long as I am alive. Dussasana, fear not! I am coming to your rescue'; and ordered the charioteer to drive him straight to Dussasana. But the charioteer answered that the horses were unfit to draw the chariot; and Duryodhana got down from the chariot and would have forced his way through the dense lines of

his enemies, relying on his mace, had not the charioteer falling at his master's feet told him that Bhimasena had fulfilled his vow and departed from the field of battle. Then Duryodhana broke out into fierce lamentations: 'Child Dussasana, who didst insult the Pandavas at my command; young hero, who didst as a child so often rest thy head upon my lap, who was next in rank to me alone, art thou then gone? Dost thou not hear my call?'

On the field of battle all was confusion. Some lay writhing in agony; others left the fight to draw out the arrow-heads embeded in their flesh. At one spot stood the mother of a hero and his wife, clad in red robes and adorned with resplendent jewels. Elsewhere a troop of soldiers wept, forgetful of their wounds, gazing at their master's riderless horse. And Duryodhana, chief of a host of warriors, who at the outset had eleven armies at his command, he, the eldest of a hundred brothers, aided by the great heroes, Bhishma, Drona, Salya, Karna, Kripa and Asvatthama, had disappeared from the plain. Verily the crimes of the Kauravas, their attempt to burn the Pandavas in a house of lac and to kill Bhimasena with poisoned dishes, their cheating with the dice, and last of all, their outrageous treatment of Draupadi, had borne bitter fruit!

Next day the battle was renewed. Karna, furious at the death of Dussasana, attacked Bhimasena with a ceaseless shower of arrows. The warriors, horses, and elephants of the contending hosts raised such a cloud of dust that the heavens were obscured. The sound of the

straining bows was as the rumble of thunder-clouds; the arrows fell like rain, and, striking the armour, flashed like lightning. Into this chaos rode Arjuna to help his elder brother. His magnificent chariot, distinguished from others by the figure of a monkey on his standard, was driven by Vasudeva, who, while he drove, bore his discus and his conch, his mace and his sword. Karna's son, Vrishasena, discharged arrows without number upon Arjuna's chariot, so that it resembled a tree hidden by swarming bees.

To him said Arjuna, gently smiling, 'Vrishasena, even your father dare not face me, when roused to anger, get thee gone, child, and fight with boys of thine own age.' To this speech Vrishasena answered with another volley of arrows that sharply stung Arjuna. Maddened with the pain, the Pandava bent his famous bow, *Gandiva,* and let fly such a multitude of arrows that the battlefield turned dark. Vrishasena replied with a volley more wonderful to behold, for his hand moved from quiver to bow and back from bow to quiver so quickly that the movement was invisible. The warriors on both sides stopped to witness the combat and cried, 'Well done, Vrishasena, well done!' Karna looked on, his heart torn by conflicting joy, rage and pity. But Arjuna, incensed by the shouts of the hosts, launched such a terrible volley that Vrishasena's chariot was shattered and his bow cut in two. Thereupon Karna stayed for a time his assault on Bhimasena and levelled his bow at Arjuna, that his son might call up another chariot. Once more equipped and shouting his war-cry, young Vrishasena attacked

Arjuna again. And Arjuna, careless of the young hero's arrows, took a javelin tinkling with golden bells and bright as the cloudless sky and hurled it at him. The sight of the flying dart startled the father, so that his bow fell from his hands; and Bhimasena, in his delight, uttered a loud lion-cry. But Vrishasena, when it was yet half-way to him, broke the javelin into three parts with his arrows. The war-drums blared, the soldiers shouted, 'Well done!' and a shower of flowers fell from the sky.

Karna asked Bhimasena for a short respite that they both might watch the marvellous archery of the two warriors. Bhimasena consented and they desisted from their duel and became spectators. Arjuna, infuriated when he saw his javelin cut to pieces, cried, 'Duryodhana, and other Kaurava princes, Karna, master of craftiness, and all you who do battle from chariots, my son Abhimanyu was surrounded when alone, and was done to death when I was afar. But I will slay this Vrishasena in the very presence of his father.' So saying he bent Gandiva and released the string with a crash as of thunder, and from the bow flowed two streams of arrows. Then, not the sky, not the king of the Angas, not his hero son, not their chariots, not the field of battle, not the standards, not the tents, not the soldiers could be seen. When the shower of arrows ceased, the Pandava heroes uttered resounding cries of joy; but the Kauravas lamented loudly 'Woe, woe! our prince Vrishasena is slain.' And there lay the young warrior, stretched on his chariot, pierced to the heart by a fatal arrow; his charioteer and

his horses were slain ; his umbrella, bow, chowries and standard were all shattered.

Tears rolled from Karna's eyes. Heedless of other foes, he directed all his shafts against Arjuna. Bhimasena, Nakula, Sahadeva and the allies of the Pandavas, surrounded that hero's chariot, to protect him from the onslaught of Karna, maddened by his son's death. But ere long the horses of Karna's chariot were wounded by the Pandava's arrows, and Karna descended from his chariot, and, before another could be brought to him, dipping the point of an arrow in the blood that streamed from his body, wrote on a piece of cloth this letter :—'Hail ! Karna, having clasped Duryodhana for the last time, thus writes from the battlefield. You thought I was master of all weapons, and that there was none I could not defeat on the field of battle. I was to you more than your brothers. You deemed that I could conquer the Pandavas ; yet have I not been able to kill the foe of Dussasana. Seek therefore the redress of your wrongs, I beg of you, by the prowess of your own arms or by tears and lamentation.' Then resolved to die in the fight, he slipped off his armour and once more attacked Arjuna.

When Duryodhana read Karna's missive, he was enraged all the more against the Pandavas and called for his chariot to take his place in the battlefield ; but before it could be brought to him, Dhritarashtra and Gandhari, his father and mother, sought him out that they might urge him to withdraw from the contest. They begged him to abandon pride and make peace with the Pandavas.

But Duryodhana refused to give up the fight, though many of his supporters had been killed.

While they were still discussing the matter, there was heard from the battlefield the loud blare of trumpets, mingled with cries of woe. Duryodhana besought his father to let him return to the battlefield before news of further calamity should arrive. But Dhritarashtra asked him if secret means to destroy the enemy could not be devised. Duryodhana made answer, 'My foes have killed my brethren before my eyes; surely they do not deserve death by treachery. Let but destiny be impartial, and I shall yet rid the earth of the Pandavas.'

At this moment was heard a voice from the battlefield, crying, 'Warriors, bear to the chief of the Kauravas the news that the battle has again commenced. Evil news ought not to be hidden; by bold action disaster should be prevented. Salya has cast aside his whip and reins; his body is covered with arrows bearing Arjuna's name. The horses unguided draw the empty chariots along the well-worn tracks of the field of battle. Salya tells all who ask such news of the king of the Angas as is a dagger to the hearts of the Kauravas.'

Duryodhana stood awhile perplexed at the meaning of the cry, when a charioteer entered, fell at his feet, and said, 'O Prince, Salya has returned with Karna's empty chariot.' Thereupon Dhritarashtra said, 'He who was our mainstay after Bhishma and Drona, even he is now gone; and my own son, Duryodhana, is without a friend.' Duryodhana lamented, 'Karna, speak

to me, as you were wont to do, words to delight the ear. Will you thus leave your friend, who was never parted from you, and never harmed you? O Father, now that the lord of the Angas is gone, my very breath is shame. No more time will I waste in idle tears, but will go forth to destroy the race of him who slew Karna.' He asked the charioteer how the feat, deemed impossible, of slaying Karna, had been achieved; and the charioteer told him how, when Karna's chariot stuck in the thick dust of the plain, Arjuna shot him down with his arrows. Gandhari asked Duryodhana whether he would first fight with Bhimasena; but he answered that he would first kill with his arrows the caitiff who had slain Karna.

He ordered his chariot to be brought up. Before he went, his parents asked whom he would appoint as his commander-in-chief, Salya or Asvatthama. 'Neither,' said he, 'for I will be my own general.' While they yet talked, Bhimasena and Arjuna were seen driving to where they sat. Duryodhana would have sent his parents in a chariot for safety to their own tents; but Dhritarashtra desired to stay and meet the visitors. Arjuna bowed to the aged pair and said, 'Here bows before you the Pandava who slew Karna, on whose prowess your sons relied.' Bhimasena said, 'Here bows before you Bhimasena who shed the blood of Dussasana and will yet break the thigh of Duryodhana.' Dhritarashtra replied in anger, 'Bhimasena, unchivalrous of mind, wherever Kshattriyas meet to fight, some triumph and others suffer defeat or death. Why do you insult

us with these boastful words?' Bhima replied, 'Father, I speak not through pride or insolence; but I announce this to you, since you calmly witnessed that execrable insult to Draupadi, when she was dragged before your assembly by the hair of her head.' Duryodhana said, 'The wife of the Pandavas, who became my slave by the verdict of the dice, was so treated in my father's assembly at my orders. Your boasts are out of place till you defeat me in equal fight.'

He would have straightway fought Bhimasena, but that his father held him back. Arjuna spoke again, 'My noble brother, he knows not what he says. His mind is full of sorrow for the death of his hundred brothers; wherefore he bravely slays us both with words. Take no heed of his ravings.' And Bhimasena said to Duryodhana, 'Thou blot on the race of Bharata, I would have killed thee here, had not these elders hindered me. Thou art fit only to shed tears like a woman! Thou didst look on while I rent thy brother's chest, and didst nothing to save him.' Duryodhana retorted, 'Thou vile wretch, my slave by the chance of the dice, thou brutal Pandava, I am not skilled at boasting; yet I vow that I shall stretch thee on the battlefield and smash thy bones with my mace.' And Bhimasena no less fiercely said, 'Hear thou my vow also; before sunset will I pound thy thigh-bone with my club, plant my foot on thy head and daub my body with thy blood, as with sandal-paste, even to the tips of my nails.'

At this moment was heard the proclamation of Yudhishthira on the battlefield, 'Hear, O

Bhimasena and Arjuna; the illustrious Yudhishthira commands that kinsmen place on the funeral pyre the bodies of kinsmen killed in the fight, that water be offered to their departed souls and that, when the sun has set, for this day the battle shall cease.'

From another part of the field was heard the loud challenge, 'Behold, I take up again my bow that was laid aside in my wrath with Karna. Arjuna, great have been your exploits on the battlefield; turn now to me who have not forgotten the graceless slaying of my father.' These words heartened Dhritarashtra who counselled Duryodhana to welcome Asvatthama with respect. And Duryodhana rose and offered a seat to his guru's son. 'Duryodhana' said Asvatthama, 'Karna, despite his fair words, did nothing; but, I, the son of Drona, have come; you need no longer fear that your foes will escape punishment.' 'Son of my preceptor,' Duryodhana replied, 'Will you not stay till I, too, am dead? For Karna and Duryodhana are one, in death as in life.' Plainly there lingered in Duryodhana's mind a partiality for Karna. Asvatthama was wroth and retired in dudgeon. But Dhritarashtra sent a messenger after him to say, 'My son in his grief uttered harsh words; yet remember that you are his foster-brother and that I have ever cherished you as much as him. Forget, therefore, the words he has spoken in his excessive love for Karna, and remember only that your father was treacherously made to lay aside his arms and, when unarmed, was slain with contumely: this it is your duty to avenge.'

So saying the aged king and queen rose and departed to the tent of Salya, king of the Madras.

When the battle was resumed, Yudhishthira met and slew Salya, the lord of the Madras; the royal family of Gandhara fell victims to Sahadeva's weapons; the Kaurava warriors fled from the field, routed by fierce Dhrishtadyumna. Then Kripa and Asvatthama retired from the fight. Duryodhana, left alone and fearing that Bhimasena would kill him before sunset, fled and hid himself. Bhima and Arjuna, seated in one chariot, driven by Vasudeva, made search for him through the whole land of Samantapanchaka, where, of old, Parasurama destroyed the Kshattriyas and filled five lakes with their blood. As they drove, Arjuna sighed deeply in his disappointment. Bhimasena would cast at his club glances from his blazing eyes that were as the lightning flashes in the rainy season; and Vasudeva cursed the perversity of fate that let the object of their vengeance slip from their hands.

Yudhishthira retired to his tent; he thought that after they had crossed the great ocean of Bhimasena's heroism, after they had put out the fire of Drona's skill, after they had crushed the serpent Karna, after they had despatched Salya to Svarga, when there was but little to complete their victory, it was hard that the vow of his brother to slay Duryodhana before sunset should put their lives again in jeopardy. Forthwith he ordered that strict search should be made for the Kaurava's footprints, and his place of refuge should be traced.

Then there came a man to Bhimasena, to tell

him of what he had seen : on the margin of the great lake near by, footprints showed that two men had entered into the lake and that one of them had returned, but not the other. Guided by him, Vasudeva, Bhimasena and Arjuna and their company went to the lake. Krishna, who recognised the footprints as Duryodhana's, told the rest how Duryodhana had practised long suspension of his breath ; he must be lying hidden in the bed of the lake. Bhimasena forthwith entered the lake and flogged the water with his club till it overflowed its banks. In tones of thunder he cried, 'Thou boaster of thy valour, which yet thou art without, thou base son of Dhritarashtra, who didst order the public insult of Draupadi, dost thou now lie hid in the ooze of the lake for fear of me? The fire of Draupadi's wrath has been fairly quenched, since the wives of so many Kauravas slain have perforce unloosed their tresses and lamented. Thou didst see the blood gush from Dussasana's breast when I rent it asunder. Art thou so cowardly that thou darest not avenge his death on me?'

Bhimasena shook the water of the lake even as the Lord stirred the Ocean of Milk with the Mandara Mountain. And Duryodhana hastily rose from the bed of the mere, and balancing his mace on his hand, said, 'Fool, didst thou think that Duryodhana lay hidden through fear? Know that, ashamed to rest in the presence of the folk before accomplishing my vow to kill the sons of Pandu, I came hither to take repose beneath the waters of the lake.' Both Duryodhana and Bhimasena came out of the water for the combat ;

but when the former saw the battlefield covered with broken chariots and mangled bodies of men, horses and elephants, he sat down and sighed deeply, and Bhimasena said to him, 'Lord of the Kauravas, away with grief at the sight of your kinsmen slain or at the thought that the Pandavas are unhurt ; come rather and fight with whomsoever of us thou deemest to be a warrior worthy of thee.' To him Duryodhana answered, 'Arjuna slew Karna, and thou didst kill Dussasana. The one is therefore as much my foe as the other. But, since thou, Bhimasena, art a lover of adventure, I will do battle with thee.' Then whirling their clubs they started a mortal combat.

As the fight went on, Krishna sent a messenger to Yudhishthira and Draupadi to tell them that Bhima had Duryodhana in his grasp, so that Draupadi might very soon bind her tresses. Yudhishthira immediately ordered auspicious rites to be performed for Bhimasena's success. But shortly after a Rakshasa, by name Charvaka, disguised as an ascetic, entered Yudhishthira's presence and, having been bathed and fed, he, little by little, as if unwillingly, unfolded this tale :—'Duryodhana and Bhimasena were engaged in fierce duel of which Balarama, Duryodhana's guru, was for long a spectator. At last, impelled by love for his pupil, Krishna's elder brother gave him secret counsel, whereby he killed Bhimasena and so avenged Dussasana's death. Arjuna in rage and grief, threw down his magic bow and, though Vasudeva strove to dissuade him, challenged Duryodhana to a duel with

clubs. Balarama, foreseeing that Arjuna would be killed in the fight, induced Krishna to mount his chariot and drove off to Dvaraka.'

Draupadi dropped into a swoon at the tale. Yudhishthira burst out into lamentations :—'Child Bhimasena, our succour in the dangers of our forest life, in devotion to me thou didst take slavery as thy lot, when I, yielding to my mad gambler's passion, staked thy liberty and lost. Hast thou deserted me?' When Draupadi revived, she mourned; 'My lord, thou didst promise to bind up my braid. Is it fitting for a Kshattriya to neglect to fufil his promises? Let me mount the funeral pyre and follow my lord Bhima whither he has gone.' And Yudhishthira said that, since he could not endure to see Bhimasena and Arjuna covered with gore, he would mount the funeral pyre. Just then they heard the frightful sound of a conch blown afar by some one elated with the pride of strength. Resolved to die before further evil news reached him, Yudhishthira sent a message to Sahadeva beseeching him and Nakula not to follow in the path of their elder brothers, but to live to perform the sraddha of their parents.

As the time for them to mount the pyre approached and as their determination was strong, the royal servants threw themselves in front of Yudhishthira and Draupadi, begging them not to immolate themselves. But they would not listen. Yudhishthira performed the necessary ablutions and, taking handful after handful of water, offered each saying, 'This handful of water I offer to Bhishma,' our elder, son of Ganga; this to Santanu, our great grandsire; this to Vichitravirya,

our grandsire; and this to Pandu, our revered father. This I offer to Bhimasena; stay awhile, child, for soon shall I come to share it with you. Dear Bhimasena, you ever gave me the right of elder birth and followed me in all things: how comes it then that you drink the water of funeral oblation before me?' After he had spoken, and when Draupadi had offered water to Bhimasena and to Arjuna, Yudhishthira had a sudden omen that good news was at hand. Shortly a cry was heard that Duryodhana, his body and clothes covered with blood and holding in his hand his terrible, blood-stained club, was approaching in search of Draupadi. Yudhishthira forthwith ordered his bow and arrows to be brought that he might resist the Kaurava. It was an error; for, it was Bhimasena, and not Duryodhana, who entered and said, 'I am neither a Rakshasa nor a Bhuta, but a Kshattriya who has fulfilled his vow. Ye warriors, why do you thus crouch in fear? Tell me where Draupadi can be found.' He would have seized her by the hair, had not Yudhishthira, still mistaking him for Duryodhana, grappled with him as for a deadly struggle. The servants were wiser than he and cried that it was not the Kaurava, but Bhimasena, come as a victor having accomplished his vow.

Bhima then spoke, 'I have hurled Duryodhana to the ground and bathed my body with his blood. He no longer lives; the kingship has come to you, my elder brother.' And Yudhishthira loosed his hold on Bhimasena and embraced him with joy. Bhimasena turned to Draupadi and

said, 'Queen, daughter of the Panchala king, good fortune smiles upon you, now that the race of your enemies is all destroyed. Shrink not from me, thus covered with blood. Remember my vow, that I would bind your braid with hands stained with the blood of Duryodhana.' So saying, he gathered the dishevelled tresses hanging from her head, braided them and tied them up.

NOTES

Agastya: the Rishi who first introduced Aryan culture south of the Vindhyas. Lopamudra was his wife.

Angiras: Rishi—teacher of the school of materialism, called Charvaka.

Asrama: abode of ascetics, where the unfortunate took refuge.

Avanti: another name of Ujjayini, also the name of the country of which Ujjayini was capital.

Balarama: elder brother of Krishna. Also called Baladeva.

Bharadvaja: a Rishi who founded the family of Brahmans to which Asvatthama belonged.

Bharata (Race of): Bharata was the first great Emperor (Sarva-bhauma) of all India, which hence was called Bharata-varsha.

Bhishma: brother of the great grandsire of the Kauravas and the Pandavas and their great teacher.

Bhuta: demon.

Chakravaka: the red goose, usually called the Brahmany duck noted for its devotion to its mate.

Chintamani: a magic stone which grants all wishes.

Chowries: tails of deer, covered with hair, used as fly whisks.

Day sacred to Saukara: called Pradosham.

Drupada: one of the kings who fought on the side of the Pandavas.

Dvaraka: capital of Krishna, on the west coast of Guzerat.

Ghatotkacha: son of Bhimasena by a giant mother.

God of Love: called Kamadeva or Madana.

Great Bear: group of seven stars, called Saptharishis.

Indraprastha: near Delhi, now called Indrapat. The other places were in the district near.

Kalindi: a name of the Jamna.

Kartikeya: god of war and thieves. Also called Subrahmanya, second son of Siva.

Kayastha: professional writer or accountant.

Kauravas: descendants of Kuru.

Kausambi: capital of the Vatsa country.

Kulatu: a hill district in Northern India. Perhaps what is now called the Kulu district,

Kurukshetra: where the battle between the Kauravas and the Pandavas was fought. The capital of the Kauravas.

Laws of Manu (The) : the chief code of secular and religious laws followed by the Hindus ; said to have been propagated by Manu, the father of mankind.

Malaya : what is now called Malabar. Malaya breezes indicate the approach of spring.

Mandara Mountain : with this mountain, Vishnu churned the Ocean of Milk, whence Amrita was produced,

Ocean of Milk : which Vishnu churned at the dawn of creation.

Padmavati : capital of Malva.

Panchavati : at the source of the Godavari, where Rama lived with his wife.

Parasurama : a Brahman whose father was ill-treated and killed by a Kshattriya prince. In revenge, Parasurama destroyed the Kshattriyas twenty-one times.

Pataliputra : capital of Magadha.

Pauravas : so called being descendants of Puru.

Pictures of Yama : pictures showing the punishments given to sinners by Yama.

Plectrum : instrument, of ivory or horn, for striking the strings of a vina.

Poison-maid : a magic contrivance, the details of which are unknown.

Prachetas : another name of Valmiki.

Rahu's jaws : the Hindus believe that when there is an eclipse of the moon, Rahu, a dragon, swallows her, and when the eclipse ends, the moon is rescued from his jaws.

Realgar : an orange-red mineral, used as pigment.

Salya : charioteer of Karna.

Samantapanchaka : the district of Kurukshetra.

Sindhu and Madhumati : small streams near Ujjayini.

Sraddha : funeral ceremonies for the dead.

Sreshthi : otherwise Setthi, head of the merchant-guild of a town.

Sri Parvata : the same as Sri Sailam, an old abode of Sanyasis in the heart of the Deccan forest.

Subhadra : wife of Arjuna.

Svarga : the pla where souls live in happiness, as a reward of their good eds, between the time of their death and their next rebirth in the mortal world. The immortal Gods live in Svarga.

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